Title

Working together for a safe system: progress of the resources developed for WA Local Governments.

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Abstract

The Western Australian Local Government Association established the Local Government Safe System Project (LGSSP) in May 2009. The project goal is to increase the uptake of safe system principles by Local Government, in a shared responsibility approach, for the implementation of *Towards Zero: Western Australia's road safety strategy 2008-2020*.

Phase one of the project focused on raising awareness and understanding of the safe system approach among Local Governments; clarifying the current level of capacity of Local Governments to adopt a safe system approach; and identifying the barriers and opportunities for Local Governments to move towards this approach. The first phase provided a clear picture of a Local Government sector that understands the importance of road safety and their role in preventing crashes.

However, additional support was recognised by the sector for the move into adoption and implementation of a safe system. Therefore, phase two has concentrated on the adoption and implementation of a safe system approach into Local Government strategies and operations. Phase two provided relevant support and resources to Local Governments to enable the progression towards a safe system. Based on Local Government requests, three key safe system implementation resources have been developed, which are:

1. *Guiding document:* Safe System Guiding Principles for Local Government
2. *Framework for action*: Local Government Safe System Improvement Program
3. *How to guide:* Safe System Toolkit for Local Government

This paper will reflect on the progress made so far of the resources specifically developed for Local Governments, for the implementation of the safe system approach to road safety.

Introduction

Local Governments are key partners in the shared responsibility of road safety in Western Australia and manage a total road length of 128,147 kilometres, which represents 72 per cent of the Western Australian road network (Western Australian Local Government Association 2011). The local road network is where 61 per cent of all serious crashes occur i.e. those resulting in death or serious injury (Main Roads 2010). As designers and operators of this extensive road network, and as influential leaders in local communities, Local Governments are well placed to have a positive impact on road safety outcomes.

The safe system approach is a holistic view of road safety, which resulted from a major shift between the onus placed on road users to those who design, build and maintain the transport system (Western Australian Road Safety Council 2009). For road authorities including Local Governments, planning and developing a safe transport system means looking beyond set standards and moving past the traditional roles; it means using safe system treatments and countermeasures so that when people do make mistakes on the road the outcome is less likely to result in death or serious injury. Along with the construction and maintenance of roads, Local Governments can influence road safety outcomes across each of the safe system cornerstones through their responsibilities as a road authority, planning authority, employer, fleet operator and leadership in the community.

The Local Government Safe System Project (LGSSP) evolved from this significant shift in the approach to road safety. With funding from the Road Trauma Trust Account (speed and red light camera fines), the LGSSP was established in May 2009. The LGSSP was developed in recognition of the crucial role of Local Governments in the effective implementation of *Towards Zero*. The goal of the LGSSP is to increase the uptake of safe system principles by Local Governments. The LGSSP is designed to complement the policy, advocacy and leadership work of WALGA, and the network of local level road safety partnerships developed across the state since the RoadWise Program was launched in 1994.

Phase one strategies

Phase one of the LGSSP explored new ground in terms of the adoption of the safe system approach by the Local Government sector in WA. This initial phase commenced in May 2009 and concluded in July 2011 and focused on establishing a baseline level of safe system understanding among Local Governments, as well as gauging the challenges and opportunities for Local Governments as they move towards a safe system.

The phase one strategies were to:
- Communicate the benefits of the safe road transport system.
- Work with the sector and other partners to develop a set of safe system guiding principles for greater clarity on the application of the safe system approach at the Local Government level.
- Gather information and data on the current situation in Local Governments regarding their capacity to implement a safe system.
- Through consultation methods identify the barriers and enablers for Local Governments to embed safe system principles in policy and practice

Phase two sub-objectives and strategies

Phase two builds on the findings from the first phase, and works to assist Local Governments to implement the safe system approach. The second phase aims to make a more tangible contribution to the effective delivery of *Towards Zero*. The objectives and strategies identified for phase two focuses on the provision of relevant support and resources for WA Local Governments during the transition to adopt a safe system.

The goal and objective of phase two remain the same from phase one. However, the strategies and methods move from project planning into project implementation. Based on feedback received during the first phase the phase two sub-objectives were developed, as follows:

- Building commitment to *Towards Zero* among Local Governments
- Facilitating knowledge transfer opportunities and other learning opportunities about the safe system approach to road safety for Local Government officers and Elected Members
- Assisting with the transitional changes within Local Governments for the implementation of the safe system approach
- Encouraging the uptake of the Safe System Guiding Principles for Local Government

The sub-objectives are expanded through four strategies, which are:

- Engaging Local Governments in the benefits of the safe system approach and the important role they play in creating a safe system in our communities
- Advocating on behalf of the sector for improved structures to support the implementation of the safe system approach, by:
  - Maximising funding opportunities for Local Governments
  - Negotiating regular analysed and interpreted crash data for local roads
- Fostering safe system leadership among Local Governments, by:
  - Encouraging Local Government to make a declaration for road safety
  - Supporting safe system champions within the sector through professional and personal learning opportunities
  - Encouraging demonstration and pilot projects
- Developing tools and resources specifically for Local Governments in order to support the adoption and implementation of the safe system approach, which includes the:
  - Local Government Safe System Improvement Program (LGSSIP)
  - Safe System Toolkit for Local Government

The focus of this paper will be on the three key safe system implementation resources, which are:
1. *Guiding document:* Safe System Guiding Principles for Local Government
2. *Framework for action:* LGSSIP
3. *How to guide:* Safe System Toolkit for Local Government

Figure 1: Links between the three key resources of the Local Government Safe System Project

These resources link together and work in conjunction with one another, as seen on the right.

Development of the guiding document

The **Safe System Guiding Principles for Local Government** were established through consensus with the Local Government sector in WA. The development process, outlined in the diagram below, involved creating a set of agreed principles to assist Local Governments in the adoption and implementation of a new approach for the improvement of road safety outcomes in their communities.

Comprehensive literature search and review

Draft principles prepared

Consultation with expert panel

Guiding principles prepared

Safe System Guiding Principles for Local Government

Figure 2: Development process of the guiding principles.

Often literature reviews are conducted as an initial step in the research process and have a number of benefits. The LGSSP team wanted to confirm whether or not a similar concept had been undertaken elsewhere prior to developing any principles. It was essential the guiding principles were based on evidence of current best practice. A comprehensive literature search was undertaken to review documents relating to the safe system approach, national and international road safety strategies, research conducted on the safe system principles and cornerstones, along with reports on community-based road safety programs.

Often, documents are framed in a national context and essentially, the literature review provided an opportunity to relate these concepts to the local level. The current best practice information needed to be reviewed and made relevant for Local Governments. The lack of literature appropriate for Local Governments highlighted the importance of developing a guiding document specific to the Local Government sector. While this literature search was comprehensive and systematic, it was not exhaustive. A total of thirty documents provided supporting evidence for the draft principles.

The review also assisted in the development of the most appropriate research method to use for the consensus process. This occurred through the examination of research reports describing the methods used in other consensus processes, and the successes and limitations of the various processes. The variety of methods were then assessed against the purpose of the guiding principles and how best to develop the draft principles.

A set of forty-four draft principles were developed based on the literature review, and worded to ensure suitability and relevance for Local Governments. Each draft principle was supported by evidence from the literature search, which included a criteria regarding consistent terminology, word count, and minimum number of references required. It was important to ensure all draft principles had similar inclusion criteria to allow for minimal bias during the consultation and validation process. The draft principles provided a starting point for the panellists, and meant they could consider and rank the principles in comparison to each other. The draft principles also allowed the panellists to mix-and-match aspects of the statements, through the comments section of the online questionnaire. The key reason for using a consensus research method is the relatively high validity in resolving situations where limited evidence is available. Consensus processes rely on the knowledge and experience of experts and can offer the most beneficial outcomes. Due to the lack of specific research on the safe system approach at a local level, the consensus process was the most appropriate, credible method to use in gathering data regarding local road safety. An important aspect of the research was for the members of the panel to be experts in their field. Therefore, in selecting the panel a primary objective was to obtain participation from individuals who are regularly involved in Western Australian Local Governments and/or road safety. Selection criteria were developed to ensure the experts consulted in this process were relevant to the sector. A list of local, national and international experts was compiled by the LGSSP Advisory Group, and invited to participate in the process as part of the panel.

A total of sixty-five panellists provided comment on the draft principles. The panellists included representatives from Local Government (officers and Elected Members), along with a number of interstate, and international road safety specialists. The panellists were asked to consider and rate the draft principles over a series of three rounds, via an anonymous electronic questionnaire. After each round, the LGSSP project team and Advisory Group assessed the feedback and rankings given by the panel. Draft principles ranking below a pre-determined threshold were removed, and comments from the panel incorporated into the remaining principles before they were finalised into the next round. Throughout the entire development process of the guiding principles, significant consultation occurred with an Advisory Group. The Advisory Group were involved in every phase of the process which allowed for greater transparency, reduced bias and increased expert guidance. The role of the Advisory Group was to provide feedback on the consensus process, comment on the draft principles, monitor the results and review the final set of principles. The consensus process resulted in seven principles that were strongly supported by the panel, one of which became an overarching principle due to the strong support from the panellists as well as the Advisory Group. The guiding principles were endorsed by the Advisory Group in December 2010 and WALGA's State Council in February 2011.

Progress of the guiding principles

At the LGSSP phase two launch in March 2012 all attendees received a copy of the guiding principles document, with a total of 60 being distributed on the day. Copies were also sent to the sixty-five panellists, as well as the members of the Advisory Group. However, it is important to recognise progression of the guiding principles is more than just distribution. The LGSSP team wanted to ensure understanding of the guiding principles, so a series of workshops has been undertaken. Included in the workshop was an explanation about the development and importance of the guiding principles, as well their function as a set of guidelines. This workshop series not only focused on the guiding principles but introduced the other specific resources available to Local Governments.

Development of a framework for action

The **Local Government Safe System Improvement Program (LGSSIP)** provides a framework where participating Local Governments can assess and improve the way they manage road safety at an organisational level. The aim of the program is to achieve a whole of organisation understanding and commitment to apply world's best practice road safety.

The LGSSIP program is based on the Road Safety Management Model, seen below, which was developed by the Land Transport Safety Authority of New Zealand in 2000 and refined by the European Transport Safety Council in 2001. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) further recommended its usage in their 2008 publication 'Towards Zero: Ambitious Road Safety Targets and the Safe System Approach'. This model identifies all the elements that are essential for delivering road safety interventions, as well as being essential in determining the organisations level of performance. The LGSSP uses this model to examine the relationship between road safety outcomes and the necessary outputs required to achieve the desired outcomes.

Outcomes
Social costs of road safety
Meeting road safety targets

Road safety outputs
Planning, design and operation of the road network

Institutional management functions
Results focused; Coordination; Legislation; Funding and resource allocation; Promotion; Monitoring and evaluation; Research and development and knowledge transfer.

Figure 3: Road safety management mode (Land Transport Safety Authority (2000) and Bliss and Breen, 2008)

The LGSSIP applies the institutional management functions to guide Local Governments through the identification and development their road safety visions and objectives, the policies and plans designed to achieve these objectives and the provision of resources to implement them. Essentially, the institutional management functions provide a comprehensive outline for the LGSSIP.

There are a number of steps involved in the LGSSIP, as shown in the diagram below.
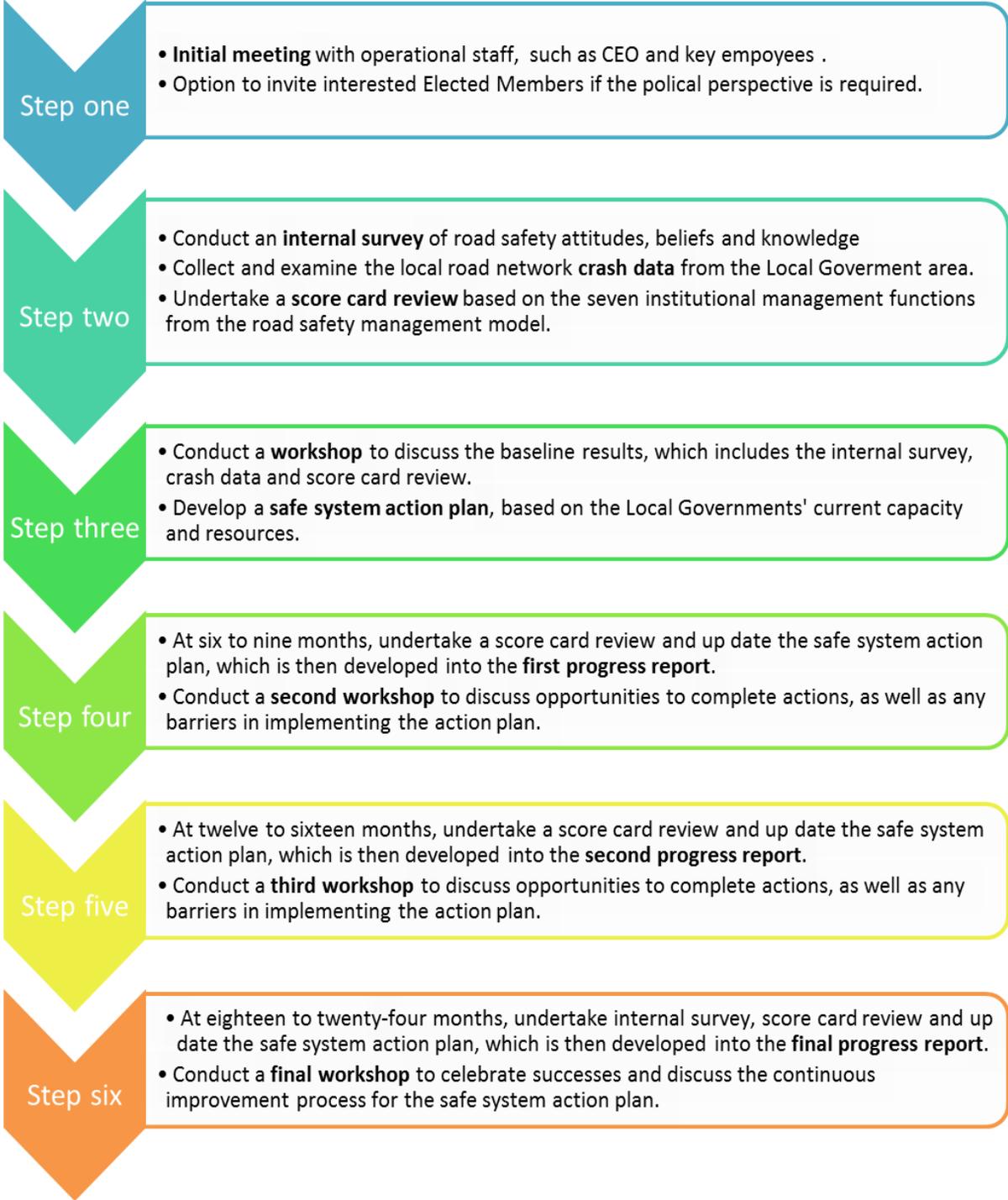
Step one
- **Initial meeting** with operational staff, such as CEO and key empoyees .
- Option to invite interested Elected Members if the polical perspective is required.

Step two
- Conduct an **internal survey** of road safety attitudes, beliefs and knowledge
- Collect and examine the local road network **crash data** from the Local Goverment area.
- Undertake a **score card review** based on the seven institutional management functions from the road safety management model.

Step three
- Conduct a **workshop** to discuss the baseline results, which includes the internal survey, crash data and score card review.
- Develop a **safe system action plan**, based on the Local Governments' current capacity and resources.

Step four
- At six to nine months, undertake a score card review and up date the safe system action plan, which is then developed into the **first progress report**.
- Conduct a **second workshop** to discuss opportunities to complete actions, as well as any barriers in implementing the action plan.

Step five
- At twelve to sixteen months, undertake a score card review and up date the safe system action plan, which is then developed into the **second progress report**.
- Conduct a **third workshop** to discuss opportunities to complete actions, as well as any barriers in implementing the action plan.

Step six
- At eighteen to twenty-four months, undertake internal survey, score card review and up date the safe system action plan, which is then developed into the **final progress report**.
- Conduct a **final workshop** to celebrate successes and discuss the continuous improvement process for the safe system action plan.

Figure 4: Steps of the LGSSIP

Progress of the LGSSIP

Expressions of interest for the formative round of the LGSSIP were promoted to all WA Local Governments in November 2011. The LGSSP team recognised that an initial round involving five Local Governments would be required in order to ensure suitability of the program through consultation for WA Local Governments. Ideally, this initial round would be

comprised of two metropolitan, two regional and one remote Local Government, based on the definitions used in *Towards Zero*.
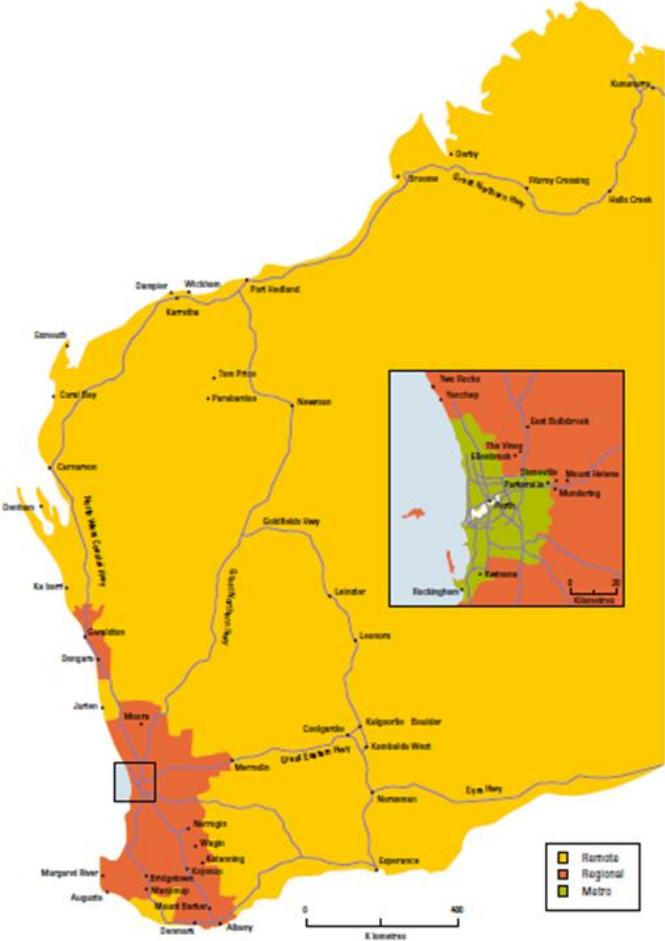

Figure 5: Metropolitan, regional and remote areas as defined by Towards Zero*

The LGSSP team was contacted by fourteen interested Local Governments. A number of these Local Governments are currently undergoing internal processes prior to making a commitment to the LGSSIP, and several others have stated interest in participating in round two of the program. However, two Local Governments have commenced the program, which are the City of South Perth (metropolitan) and the Shire of York (regional). These Local Governments have ensured high level support for the program by involving the CEO and members of the Executive Team. Due to the tailor-made nature of the LGSSIP there are already different focuses between these Local Governments, which has provided valuable information to the LGSSP team.

Future considerations for the LGSSIP primarily centre on changes to the WA Local Government sector, including the requirement for all Local Governments to complete an integrated planning framework (comprising of a Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Business Plan aligned to an Annual Budget) by July 2013. While this provides an opportunity for the LGSSIP to include road safety statements into the integrated planning process, it may also mean if safe system statements are not included in the current plans then any amendments would be postponed until the review period.

∗ *Towards Zero* used the Australian Bureau of Statistic's ARIA (Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia) index to determine which areas of WA fell into each category. The ARIA index is derived from measures of road distance between populated localities and service centres. The road distance measures are then used to generate a remoteness score for any location in Australia.

Development of the how to guide

The aim of the Safe System Toolkit for Local Government is to provide information and resources that are relevant and easily utilised by Local Governments seeking to adopt a safe system approach. The toolkit was developed in response to feedback received from Local Governments during the first phase of the LGSSP. During this initial phase it was found that Local Governments understood their role in road safety and in creating a safe road transport system. However, additional knowledge, skills and resources were requested to simplify the implementation process of the safe system approach. Therefore, the toolkit provides collated information to fill this gap, and makes available a range of tools and templates to assist Local Governments in developing an effective response to improve road safety in their local area.

The toolkit is based on the guiding principles and provides the link between each of the guiding principles and the actions that assist to implement that principle. As shown in the figure below, the development process involved actions outlined in the form of tools, templates, case studies, as well as links to relevant readings and resources. The toolkit has been developed to be a working document so additional and updated information can be supplied to the sector on a regular basis. This is important so that gaps are recognised by the Local Governments participating in the LGSSIP; resources can be developed and distributed to other Local Governments. Essentially, the toolkit provides practical, evidence based solutions tailored to suit the Local Government sector.
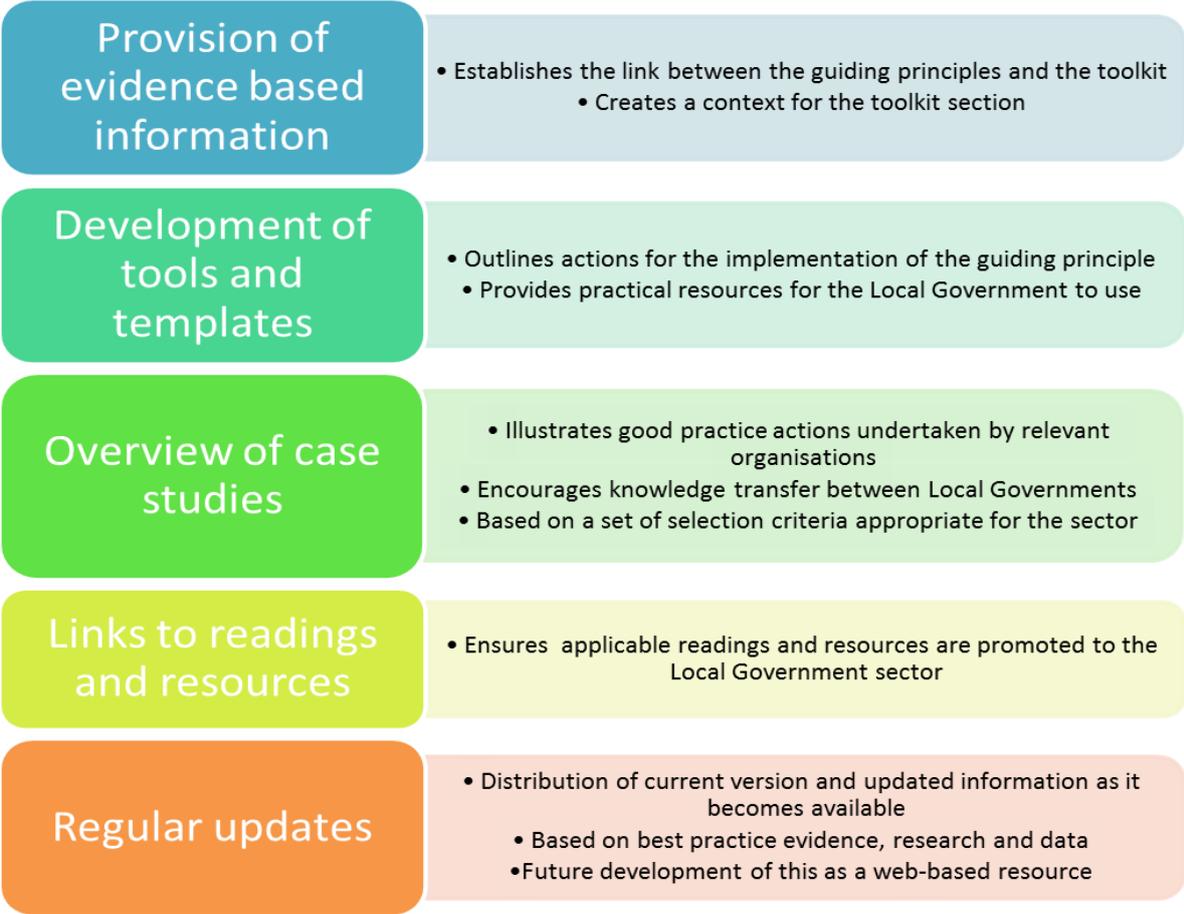

Provision of evidence based information	• Establishes the link between the guiding principles and the toolkit • Creates a context for the toolkit section
Development of tools and templates	• Outlines actions for the implementation of the guiding principle • Provides practical resources for the Local Government to use
Overview of case studies	• Illustrates good practice actions undertaken by relevant organisations • Encourages knowledge transfer between Local Governments • Based on a set of selection criteria appropriate for the sector
Links to readings and resources	• Ensures applicable readings and resources are promoted to the Local Government sector
Regular updates	• Distribution of current version and updated information as it becomes available • Based on best practice evidence, research and data • Future development of this as a web-based resource

Figure 6: Development process for the safe system toolkit

Progress of the toolkit

An essential step for the project team was to consult with Local Governments about the toolkit, especially in regards to the templates and actions required for the successful implementation of the safe system approach. Due to the vast social, economic and environmental differences across the state, as well as the diversity of the sector it was important to ensure a variety of Local Governments participated in this process. This consultation process was undertaken in two ways, through a series of workshops and via the LGSSIP. During the toolkit drafting process a number of workshops were held to gain both the political and operational perspectives. These workshops provided an overview of the *Towards Zero* vision and the safe system approach, outlined the specialist resources available and provided an opportunity for group discussions about the actions required to create a safe road transport system. In particular, the group discussions focused on the toolkit sections and allowed officers and Elected Members to share their experiences and concerns in implementing the safe system approach. This information was then analysed and included in version one of the toolkit. An important component of the LGSSIP was for the participating Local Governments to provide feedback on the current gaps in information. Once these gaps were identified the project team would undertake research to understand the issue in greater detail and ascertain best practice. If the information was appropriate for the toolkit, then the LGSSP team would develop templates, identify any case studies or relevant resources and distribute updates to Local Governments. This process allowed for regular engagement between the project team and Local Governments, as well as improved knowledge transfer across the sector.

Conclusion

This paper has reflected on the progress made so far in developing specific developed resources for Local Governments to implement the safe system approach to road safety. Since the establishment of the LGSSP the focus has been on providing additional support for the implementation of the safe system approach, based on the requests made by Local Governments. Particularly, in regards to the adoption and application of the safe system principles at a local level. A number of strategies and methods were developed to enable Local Government to move towards the safe system approach, including three key resources.

A set of **Safe System Guiding Principles for Local Government** were developed in consultation with the sector and expert panellists and are designed to provide direction and context for Local Governments to use to embrace the safe system approach at a local level. This, in turn will support internal best practice road safety outcomes being applied to the local road network. The **Local Government Safe System Improvement Program** provides a framework for individual Local Governments to assess and improve the way they manage road safety at an organisational level. The LGSSIP aims to achieve an organisational commitment to apply world's best practice road safety. The formative stage of the LGSSIP has commenced with the participants identifying their individual focuses. The **Safe System Toolkit for Local Government** provides information and resources relevant to Local Governments and outlines the actions which link to each of the guiding principles. Local Governments seeking to adopt the safe system approach use the toolkit to provide practical, evidence based solutions tailored to the Local Government sector. The engagement process used in the draft stages of the toolkit has ensured the information is appropriate for the successful implementation of the safe system approach.

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