

The DAF Leading Practice Model

Stage 1: Policy

1. Effective policy development

Elected representatives should be responsible for the development of planning policies. This should be achieved through effective consultation with the community, professional officers and relevant experts.

2. Objective rules and tests

Development assessment requirements and criteria should be written as objective rules and tests that are clearly linked to stated policy intentions. Where such rules and tests are not possible, specific policy objectives and decision guidelines should be provided.

3. Built-in improvement mechanisms

Each jurisdiction should systematically and actively review its policies and objective rules and tests to ensure that they remain relevant, effective, efficiently administered, and consistent across the jurisdiction.

Stage 2: Assessment

4. Track-based assessment

Development applications should be streamed into an assessment 'track' that corresponds with the level of assessment required to make an appropriately informed decision. The criteria and content for each track is standard.

A track-based assessment approach provides greater certainty for all stakeholders. The rationale for the different tracks should remain consistent with the model if used.

5. A single point of assessment

Only one body should assess an application, using consistent policy and objective rules and tests.

Referrals should be limited only to those agencies with a statutory role relevant to the application. A referral authority should only be able to give direction where this avoids the need for a separate approval process.

The Voice of Leadership

Referral agencies should specify their requirements in advance and comply with clear response times.

6. Notification

Where assessment involves evaluating a proposal against competing policy objectives, opportunities for third-party involvement may be provided.

7. Private sector involvement

Private sector experts should have a role in development assessment, particularly in:

- Undertaking pre-lodgement certification of applications to improve the quality of applications.
- Providing expert advice to applicants and decision makers.
- Certifying compliance where the objective rules and tests are clear and essentially technical.
- Making decisions under delegation.

Stage 3: Determination

8. Professional determination for most applications

Most development applications should be assessed and determined by professional staff or private sector experts. For those that are not, either:

Option A – Local government may delegate determination power whilst retaining the ability to call-in any application for determination by council.

Option B – An expert panel determines the application.

Ministers may have call-in powers for applications of state or territory significance provided criteria are documented and known in advance.

Stage 4: Appeals

9. Applicant appeals

An applicant should be able to seek a review of a discretionary decision.

A review of a decision should only be against the same policies and objective rules and tests as the first assessment.

10. Third-party appeals

Opportunities for third-party appeals should not be provided where applications are wholly assessed against objective rules and tests.

Opportunities for third-party appeals may be provided in limited other cases.

A review of a decision should only be against the same policies and objective rules and tests as the first assessment.

Source:

A Leading Practice Model for Development Assessment in Australia,
Development Assessment Forum (March, 2005)