



Councillor Development & Training Policy

LINKS TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN & DELIVERY PROGRAM

Direction G9 – Council is an attractive performance based employer, governed by great leadership and supported by a committed and adaptable workforce

Strategy G9b – Create a positive performance culture that builds skills in alignment with Council's Mission and Values

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Councillor Development & Training Policy

1. OBJECTIVE

This Policy has been established to demonstrate Council's commitment to ensuring Councillors have equal access to training and educational opportunities and have the opportunity to maintain their knowledge and skills base to contemporary standards and expectations.

2. BACKGROUND

The knowledge, skills and experiences that Councillors bring when they are elected and that are enhanced during an induction program generally need to be supplemented with further knowledge and skills development relevant to the specific role and responsibilities of Councillors.

It is important that Councillors have or may quickly attain a clear understanding of the system of Local Government, how their Council works and the full range of their roles and responsibilities.

It is equally important that all Councillors have continuing opportunities to undertake appropriate skills development and training in areas needed to assist them to carry out their role effectively.

A well-planned, structured and continuing training and professional development program enables Councillors to continue to develop relevant skills and knowledge over time. This is important given the varying responsibilities of the role, the dynamic nature of the legislative and policy framework within which local government operates, the many competing priorities and high community expectations.

Benefits of a professional development program include:

- Opportunity to provide needs-based training and professional development to Councillors to assist them to function well in their role and to make informed and effective decisions.
- Opportunity for Councillors to learn new skills, knowledge and gain experience, and
- Opportunity to provide structured updates on changes to key legislation and policies as well as briefings to Councillors on key issues.

Currently, there are no specific legislative requirements pertaining to Councillor training or education. However, the Division of Local Government strongly encourages Councils to develop training programs and encourage continuing development programs to support Councillors in their role.

3. DEFINITIONS

In this Policy, the following definitions apply:

LGA	Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)
Reg	Local Government (General) Regulation 2005
Policy	Councillor Training and Development Policy
The Division	Division of Local Government
LGSA	Local Government and Shires Association
LGMA	Local Government Managers Association, and
Training	Educational and/or Development and/or Training Opportunities

4. APPLICATION OF POLICY

This Policy applies to Councillors.

This Policy has been prepared with reference to:

- Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy
- Local Government and Shires Association Training and Development Plan
- Division of Local Government **Circular 07/22** – Guidelines for the Payment of Expenses and the Provision of Facilities to Mayors and Councillors, and
- Division of Local Government Councillor Development Strategy.

As a minimum, this Policy should be read in conjunction with Council's Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy.

5. POLICY

The training made available to Councillors will assist them in carrying out their local government duties. Training will be offered on a continual basis throughout the Councillor's term.

The development and delivery of a continuing professional development program for Councillors has a number of phases including:

- Commitment to continuing professional development for Councillors,
- Training and development needs analysis,
- Development of a training and development plan (including budget allocation)
- Delivery, and
- Evaluation

Commitment to Continuing Professional Development for Councillors

Council will establish, maintain and promote their commitment to Councillor training and development.

Councillor training and development should be seen as an investment to enhance the effectiveness of the Council's performance in achieving its goals (as for workforce development).

Training offered to Councillors will be classified as:

- Imperative,
- Desirable, and
- Developmental.

Imperative Training

Training offered to Councillors is considered ***imperative*** when:

- It is vital to the role of Councillor,
- Should be attended by all Councillors, and
- Specific to the legislative and governance roles and functions such as:
 - Roles and responsibilities of Councillors,
 - Relationship between Councillors, General Manager and staff,
 - Meeting Procedures,
 - Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct policies as adopted by Council, and
 - Good governance.

Councillors should attend the matters listed as "***Imperative Training***" at least once every term.

Desirable Training

Training offered to Councillors is considered “**desirable**” when:

- It is important to the role of Councillor, and
- It is in the best interest of the Councillor to attend.

Training may arise from time to time when it relates to the maintenance of good governance. It may include, but not limited to community issues which address environmental, social and economic issues and challenges:

- Financial Skills
- Planning Legislation
- Strategic Management
- Community Leadership
- Media Skills
- Handling Difficult People for Councillors, and
- Performance Management of Senior Staff.

Councillors should attend the matters listed as “Desirable Training” at least once every term.

Skills and Knowledge Self-Assessment Tool

The following list of key skills and knowledge areas will assist Councillors to become more effective. This list will identify some possible training and developmental areas for Councillors. Important skills:

- Leadership skills,
- Relationship management,
- Communication skills including negotiating, conflict resolution, advocacy and lobbying,
- Presentation skills,
- Problem solving and analytical skills,
- Teamwork skills, and
- Organisational skills.

Knowledge of:

- Federal, State and Local Government relationships,
- How Local Government Councils operate,
- Role of a Councillor,
- Councillor, General Manager and staff relationships,
- Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interests,
- Key aspects of the *Local Government Act 1993*,
- Environmental planning and assessment processes,
- Whole of community representation
- Social justice principles,
- Meeting regulations and procedures,
- Strategic management planning and reporting, particularly Integrated Planning & Reporting

- Financial management requirements in the *Local Government Act* and *Local Government (General) Regulation* and reporting processes,
- Asset management, and
- Knowledge of the demographic profile of the Council area and the social environmental and economic issues facing the community.

A Competency-based Approach

Another recommended approach found to be useful is to use a councillor competency framework. Such a framework sets out the skills, knowledge and attributes required to be an effective Councillor and may define levels of effectiveness.

One example of such a framework is the Councillor Competency Framework Update which was released by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) in 2006. The research identified seven broad competencies including their level of importance to Councillors in Victoria. The seven competencies are:

1. Leadership,
2. Governance,
3. Land use planning,
4. Strategy,
5. Relationship management,
6. Financial management, and
7. Environmental and asset management.

Developmental Training

Training offered to Councillors is considered “***developmental***” when it is aimed at further developing the skills or professional expertise of the Councillor.

Councillors are encouraged to accept training classified as “***developmental***”. Such training may include, but not limited to:

- attendance at LGSA workshops whether public, in house, regional programs or induction seminars,
- seminars and informal sessions conducted by Council with appropriate guest speakers and trainers,
- purchase of training booklets and discussion papers that could be distributed to Councillors for information,
- on-line training delivery, and
- mentoring.

The development program for Councillors provided by the LGMA of NSW and the LGSA of NSW provide professional development and training specifically catering to the needs of Councillors to assist them to understand their role and enhance their skills.

The following modules are those considered important for Councillors’ continuing development:

- Induction for NSW Local Government Councillors,
- Conflict of Interest and Model Code of Conduct,
- Financial Skills,
- Good Governance,
- Planning Legislation Skills and Knowledge,
- Effective Meeting Skills,
- Strategic Management,
- The Effective Chair in Local Government,
- Councillors as Change Initiators,
- Understanding Sustainability for Councillors,
- Media Skills,
- Advanced Media Skills,
- Dynamic Presentation Skills,
- Performance Management of Senior Staff,
- Connecting with the Community,
- Lobbying for Success,
- Community Leadership,
- Preventing Bullying and Harassment Training for Councillors
- Handling Difficult people for Councillors, and
- Speed Reading Skills for Councillors.

Minimum Training Requirements

The minimum requirements for Councillor training are:

- Internal Councillor Induction Sessions, and
- Councillor Information Seminars as delivered by the Department and LGSA.

Budget

Each year, the Council will allocate a budget to support the Councillor training and development activities to be undertaken in the following year. Progress against expenditure of the budget allocation should be reported on a quarterly basis.

Council will need to determine the size of the budget allocation, which may change annually, depending on training needs. For example, when a new Council is elected, there will be a need to budget for an induction program.

Approval of Training Payment of Expenses

Approval for training and reimbursement for expenses relating to a Councillor's attendance at training will be determined in accordance with Council's "Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy".

DLG Circular 07/22 – “Councils should consider making separate provision for the payment of relevant training and educational expenses incurred by Councillors in the budget. These expenses would support and encourage an active learning process and skills development in addition to attending seminars and conferences related to Council functions. It is essential where Council is paying these expenses that the training or educational course is directly related to the Councillor’s civic functions and responsibilities.

This initiative also supports NSW Government policy. The Minister for Local Government is keen to encourage Councillors to undertake relevant training and skills development to ensure they carry out their functions as effectively as possible.”

Notification to Councillors

- Every effort will be made by the Mayor and/or General Manager to provide Councillors with as much notice as possible of upcoming training.
- Councillors are encouraged to visit the “learning solutions” section of the Local Government and Shires Association web site (www.lgsa.org.au) to identify upcoming training programs, and
- Councillors may also notify the Mayor or General Manager of any training that they may wish to attend.

Recording and Reporting

The data to be maintained will include:

- Courses, workshops or information sessions formally made available to Councillors,
- Classification of training made available under this policy; and
- Councillors who have undertaken the training.

Data that is required by legislation will be published in the Annual Report. Reports relating to training for Councillors will be made available at any other times, by the request to Council, Mayor or General Manager.

A training database will be used to identify gaps in the Council training requirements and will be used to determine the delivery of formal training.

