



Hawkesbury City Council

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to  
item 054

Consultation Draft for the new  
Councillor Induction and Professional  
Development Guidelines  
December 2017

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# Councillor Induction and Professional Development Guidelines

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December 2017



**CONSULTATION DRAFT**

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## About these guidelines

The Councillor Induction and Professional Development Guidelines (the Guidelines) have been issued under section 23A of the *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act) to assist general managers and council staff to develop, deliver, evaluate and report on the induction and professional development programs they are required to provide mayors and councillors under the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 (the Regulation). Councils are required to consider the Guidelines when undertaking these activities.

The Guidelines have also been developed to ensure mayors and councillors are aware of the knowledge, skills and personal attributes expected of them in their civic roles under the Act, and of the support their council should be providing to ensure they are able to effectively fulfil their roles.

### THESE GUIDELINES ARE DIVIDED INTO FIVE PARTS:

**Part 1** introduction

**Part 2** explains the statutory requirements for **induction and professional development programs** for mayors and councillors in NSW.

**Part 3** guides councils on how to develop and deliver **information sessions** to potential candidates considering nominating for election.

**Part 4** guides councils on how to develop and deliver **induction programs** for newly elected and returning mayors and councillors.

**Part 5** guides councils on how to develop and deliver **ongoing professional development programs** that ensure mayors and councillors continue to develop their skills and knowledge throughout their terms in office.

**Part 6** outlines how councils are to **report** on the induction and professional development activities offered to mayors and councillors and their participation in those activities.

It is acknowledged that many NSW councils already have induction and ongoing professional development programs for mayors and councillors. It is also recognised that the needs and circumstances of councils vary, as do the skills and needs of individual mayors and councillors. The aim of the Regulation and the Guidelines is to ensure that all mayors and councillors across the state have access to such programs, and that the programs delivered by councils meet a consistent minimum standard. The Guidelines have therefore been designed to be used flexibly by councils and to accommodate, and in some cases build upon, existing programs.

These Guidelines include:

- details of the knowledge and skills that mayors and councillors are required to have or acquire in order to fulfil their roles effectively
- a framework for the development of pre-election information sessions for candidates, and induction and ongoing professional development programs for elected members
- information about the developmental stages of each program and what to consider at each stage, and
- checklists of the content that could be included in each program.

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**Part 1:**

**Introduction**



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## Background

Mayors and councillors come from a diverse range of backgrounds and bring different knowledge, skills, perspectives and insights to their roles. This is one of the strengths of a democratic and representative system of local government.

However, few new mayors or councillors have extensive knowledge of the system of local government, how a council works or the full range of their roles and responsibilities when they assume office for the first time. Some are unaware of the need for mayors and councillors to work as a team, despite their political differences, to make decisions that are in the best interests of the community. There may be others who, if they had been fully aware, prior to their election, of the nature of the role of a mayor or councillor, and of the time commitment involved, may not have nominated to stand.

The role exercised by mayors and councillors is a very demanding one and the community rightly has high expectations of the performances of the mayor and councillors. As the governing body of the council, mayors and councillors must work together as a cohesive team to meet the needs of the community. The multi-faceted nature of the roles also requires mayors and councillors to have a wide variety of skills, experience and knowledge, along with the time, passion and commitment to achieve results for the community.

From their first council meeting, mayors and councillors will be required to work together to make important decisions on behalf of their communities, and to take responsibility for those decisions. These decisions will impact on local communities, the services and infrastructure delivered by the council, and the local natural and built environments. They will often involve significant use of public money. Proper induction into their roles, and the building of the governing body as a unified and collaborative team, are vital if mayors and councillors are to be effective from the start of their terms in office.

Some mayors and councillors may need to develop knowledge and skills in areas that are unfamiliar to them in order to undertake the breadth of their roles successfully. These may include, for example, understanding council meeting procedures, understanding land use planning regulatory requirements, or interpreting financial statements.

Even experienced mayors and councillors say they can find it challenging to keep abreast of changes to the legislative and policy context for local government as well as changes to their councils' policies and procedures.

Ongoing professional development and training, as well as early relationship building between councillors, is essential if the community is to be well served by their elected representatives on council.

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## Statutory requirements

The Act prescribes the roles and responsibilities of mayors and councillors collectively as the governing body of the council and as individual members of the governing body. It also places a responsibility on each mayor and councillor to make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their roles.

To assist mayors and councillors to meet this obligation, the Regulation requires general managers to deliver induction and professional development programs that will help mayors and councillors to acquire and maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their roles. Mayors and councillors have a reciprocal obligation to participate in these programs.

**Part 2** of these Guidelines further explains what is required of councils, mayors and councillors under the Regulation.

Each council is required to publicly report on the activities offered to the mayor and councillors as part of council's induction and professional development programs, and their participation in those activities. **Part 6** of these Guidelines outlines these reporting requirements.

## Induction and professional development – an overview

### Pre-election candidate information sessions

Whilst not a regulatory requirement, it is recommended that general managers begin induction and professional development activities by holding at least one candidate information session prior to the election for people considering nominating for election.

These sessions should be designed to ensure potential candidates are fully aware and informed of what will be expected of them if they are elected. **Part 3** of these Guidelines provides more information about how each council should develop and deliver candidate information sessions.

### Induction programs

An induction program is a process used within many businesses, government agencies and non-government bodies to welcome new people to an organisation and to prepare them for their new roles.

It ensures the organisation provides a person commencing a role with all the information they need to do their job in the first few months. It also enables the person to become a useful, integrated member of the organisation, rather than being ‘thrown in at the deep end’ without understanding how to perform their role, or how it fits in with the rest of the organisation.

A good councillor induction program can build early positive relationships and teamwork between councillors, increase productivity and provide essential knowledge from the moment a mayor or councillor is elected. This can ensure newly elected mayors and councillors are more productive in a shorter period of time.

**Part 4** of these Guidelines outlines how each council should develop its councillor induction program.

### Professional development programs

A professional development program is any program which involves a deliberate and ongoing process of improving and increasing the professional knowledge, competence, skill and effectiveness of people in the workplace through training specific to their needs.

In local government, an effective professional development program can ensure mayors and councillors fill any skills or knowledge gaps they have that may otherwise prevent them from making the best possible contributions to their communities. **Part 5** of these Guidelines outlines how each council should develop its councillor professional development program.



**Part 2:**

**Statutory Context**



Under section 232(1)(g) of the Act, all mayors and councillors have a responsibility to make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform their roles.

To support this, the general manager is required under clause x of the Regulation to ensure the delivery of:

- an **induction program** for newly elected and returning councillors and a specialised supplementary induction program for the mayor within six months of their election, and
- an **ongoing professional development program** for the mayor and each councillor over the term of the council to assist them to acquire and maintain the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their roles. The content of the ongoing professional development program is to be determined in consultation with the mayor and each councillor. It must be needs-based and reflect the specific skills and knowledge required by the mayor, each individual councillor and the governing body as a whole, to perform their roles effectively.

Under the Regulation, mayors and councillors must make all reasonable efforts to participate in the activities offered to them as part of an induction or professional development program.

## Principles, roles and responsibilities under the Act

Councils are required to apply the five sets of guiding principles prescribed under the Act in exercising their functions. These principles (outlined in **Appendix A**) seek to ensure that each council carries out its functions in a way that facilitates the creation of a strong, healthy and prosperous local community. Mayors and councillors must understand these principles and be able to apply them when exercising their functions.

The Act also prescribes the roles and responsibilities of mayors and councillors, both collectively as the governing body of the council, and individually as members of the governing body (these are outlined in

**Appendix B**). Mayors and councillors must have a strong understanding of their prescribed roles and responsibilities under the Act in order to be able to fulfil them.

Councils must design their induction and professional development programs to ensure that mayors and councillors have the knowledge and skills needed to apply the guiding principles, and to undertake their roles and responsibilities prescribed under the Act.

## Reporting requirements

Mayors and councillors are ultimately accountable to the community that elects them for the performance of their duties.

To facilitate this accountability, the general manager is required under clause x of the Regulation to report to the first council meeting held after the induction program is delivered:

- the activities offered to the mayor and each councillor as part of the induction program, and
- whether or not the mayor and each councillor participated in them.

The general manager is also required to report to the first council meeting held after 30 June each year:

- the ongoing professional development activities that were offered to the mayor and each councillor in the year to 30 June, and
- whether or not the mayor and each councillor participated in these activities.

The general manager is also required to ensure these reports are published on the council's website.

The Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government may, at the request of the general manager, exempt the council from the requirement to publish details of induction and ongoing professional development activities offered to the mayor or an individual councillor where he or she is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances.

## **Part 3:**

# **Pre-election Information Sessions for Potential Candidates**



## Benefits of a pre-election candidate information session

It is vital that people who are considering nominating for election to a council have a solid understanding of the role before they nominate. This includes an understanding of what will be expected of them should they be elected, and the legislative boundaries they must work within.

Being fully informed will ensure that candidates who nominate have seriously considered whether they have the skills and personal attributes required to fulfil the responsibilities of civic office (noting that the specific knowledge required can be developed if these skills and personal attributes are present). Being fully informed will also assist them to judge whether they will be able to effectively meet the demands of representing their community on council.

The general manager should therefore ensure that at least one candidate information session is held prior to nomination day for people considering nominating for election to council.

The benefits of a pre-election information session/s include:

- candidates being fully informed about the:
  - roles and responsibilities of a mayor and/or councillor
  - the legislation and council policies they are expected to comply with
  - time commitment required, and
  - the skills, knowledge and personal attributes needed.
- candidates being given the opportunity to learn from experienced mayors and councillors
- candidates being given the opportunity to ask council any questions about the role
- candidates being aware of the financial and other support available to them to fulfil the role of a mayor and/or councillor

- candidates understanding that their behaviour as a mayor and/or councillor will be governed by council's code of conduct and that there are penalties for breaches
- council being able to provide potential candidates ahead of time the key dates of any known events that they will be required to participate in during council's term if they are elected (for example, council meetings, induction) so that candidates may then make tentative arrangements to enable them to attend the induction program if they are elected
- the community benefiting from each candidate seeking election based on a platform that reflects what they can and cannot do or achieve as councillor, and
- reduced tension and conflict due to newly elected mayors and councillors having a better understanding of their roles and what can be achieved by a unified governing body.

## Delivering a pre-election candidate information session

### Timing

Councils should plan to hold at least one candidate information session before the deadline for nomination. The session/s could be held at council premises, or another appropriate public venue/s, at a convenient time that will enable as many potential candidates as possible to attend. For councils divided into wards, consideration should be given to holding sessions in different wards.

Councils will need to ensure that the details of the candidate information session/s are well advertised in the local community (for example, the council's website, local radio, social media, newspapers, and/or any other effective means) so that any potential candidates are aware the information session/s is being held.

## Content

A checklist of the content to be included in a candidate information session/s is provided in **Appendix C**. Recommended content covers:

- the role of council
- the roles and responsibilities of the governing body and mayor and councillors, and of the general manager and other staff
- legal and ethical responsibilities
- the time commitment required of a mayor and councillor
- the support available to assist the mayor and councillors in their roles, and
- the knowledge, skills and personal attributes required to successfully fulfil the roles of mayor and councillor.

The NSW Electoral Commission provides a range of information and educational resources about the election process and the legal obligations of candidates when nominating and campaigning. More information can be found at [www.elections.nsw.gov.au](http://www.elections.nsw.gov.au) and [www.votensw.info](http://www.votensw.info).

## Delivery

The candidate information session/s should be delivered by the person who is best able to engage attendees and deliver the content in a way that will achieve the outcomes sought. This person could be the general manager, another staff member or an external provider. The general manager should be present, however, to answer any questions.

Previous or current mayors or councillors may also be invited to provide overview/s of their experience in council, and any significant issues they think potential candidates should consider before deciding whether to nominate. This could take the form of an informal talk, a panel discussion or a councillor question and answer session.

Consideration should be given to which delivery method, or combination of delivery methods, would best suit the information being conveyed and should recognise that attendees are likely to have a variety of learning styles.

## Candidate information pack

Councils should prepare a candidate information pack for attendees that provides key information for continued consideration after the session/s. This can take the form of printed material presented in a folder that potential candidates can take away and read, or a dedicated section on council's website that provides all the necessary information. The pack can also include any relevant information or resources made available by external bodies. The NSW Electoral Commission, for example, provides a range of educational resources that guide candidates through the election process.

## Cost

The cost of the information session/s should be covered by council's councillor induction and professional development budget.

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## Evaluation

The information session/s should be evaluated by council to determine how effective it was in helping potential candidates understand what is involved in being a councillor or mayor, and to enable them to assess their suitability for these roles.

The outcomes achieved from the information session/s should include, at a minimum, potential candidates fully understanding:

- the roles and responsibilities of a councillor and mayor, including the personal attributes, skills and knowledge needed to perform these roles effectively
- the legislation, code of conduct and other council policies they will need to comply with
- the time commitment that will be required from them, and
- the financial and other support available to them to fulfil the role of a mayor and/or councillor.

The evaluation should assess whether these outcomes were achieved.



## Part 4:

# Induction Program for Mayors and Councillors



## Benefits of a councillor induction program

An induction program enables the mayor and councillors to quickly become familiar with how the council works, the rules under which it operates and the complexities of the roles. It is a vital way to ensure new and returning mayors and councillors get the information they need to be effective leaders from the very beginning of the council's term.

It is important that an induction program is not simply used to present dry facts. It is also a vital opportunity to talk with councillors and the mayor about the accepted values and behaviours of the council that they have become a part of.

The induction program is also an invaluable opportunity to sow the seeds for a governing body that functions as a strong, collaborative team. It provides the chance for the mayor and each councillor to understand what motivated their new colleagues to become councillors, and to bond as a team with a common focus on making a difference for the community. It can also be used as an opportunity to have early conversations about how they would like to operate as a team to work towards common goals and to identify success factors for council and the community.

In this way, an induction program also provides an opportunity to set a positive tone for the governing body, establish clear roles and responsibilities and build trust and positive working relationships from the outset. This lays the foundations for a successful, collaborative and cooperative term in office for new mayors and councillors.

The induction program will benefit mayors and councillors by:

- providing them with access to essential information in a structured and consistent way that will assist them to function well in their role and to make informed and effective decisions from the start of their term in office

- enabling more active and rapid participation in the business of the council
- enabling them to meet, build rapport, share knowledge and experiences, and form positive working relationships with each other
- identifying common goals and a shared vision as a governing body
- introducing councillors to staff to help break down any 'us and them' divide and create one team working for the community whilst still recognising the legislated separation between the two groups
- providing an opportunity for appropriate role models and mentoring relationships to be established between experienced mayors and councillors and new councillors
- helping participants to understand key legislation
- helping participants to understand their prescribed roles and responsibilities
- briefing them on the 'big picture', and providing them with a clear understanding of council's health and performance
- enabling them to understand and agree on the key issues and tasks for the new council, and to build a vision for the governing body's term
- enabling them to understand key council information, policies and procedures
- enabling them to understand the council and the local government area
- enabling them to feel empowered with key information about the integrated planning and reporting processes and their opportunities for influence, and
- increasing their self-confidence in their ability to perform their roles.

## Returning councillors

Because local government is complex and subject to change, the mayor and all councillors, both new and experienced, should attend council's induction program at the commencement of each term.

Whilst returning councillors may already know much of the information provided in the induction program, their attendance at these sessions will demonstrate to new councillors that their roles and responsibilities are important. Returning councillors can also contribute valuable information and lessons learnt from previous council terms, and help build a positive and collaborative culture for the new governing body.

Important aspects of the induction program include building trust and positive relationships between the members of the new governing body, establishing working bonds and determining how they can work together as a team. All councillors need to be part of this process.

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## Delivering a councillor induction program

### Planning

Councils should aim to have their induction programs finalised in time to provide potential candidates the proposed induction timetable at the candidate information sessions. Candidates can then make tentative arrangements to enable them to attend the induction program if they are elected.

It is important that councillors feel welcome when they start their terms. This will send a supportive message that builds on the positive culture being encouraged for the governing body. Council should also ensure that the resources each councillor and the mayor needs are set up and ready when they start. This includes any IT equipment, office facilities or other necessary resources that will ensure they are productive from their first day in office.

### Timing

The Regulation allows a maximum of six months for the delivery of the induction program to provide councils the flexibility to develop an approach that best meets the needs of its mayor and councillors.

The first induction training session should take place as soon as possible after the results of the election are declared and prior to the first council meeting. It should aim to provide councillors with the information they need to function in their roles, including in meetings, until the rest of the induction program is delivered. The rest of the induction program must be delivered within six months of the polls being declared.

The delivery of the components of the induction program should be timed to reflect the information the councillors and the mayor need in the first week, the first month and the first three months of council. In addition, the relevant components of the induction program should be delivered before the review of the council's community strategic plan, and before the adoption of its delivery program.

Some councils prefer to deliver the full induction program as soon as possible to provide councillors with all of the information and induction training they need from the start of their term in office. However, this approach runs the risk of councillors feeling overloaded with information.

Other councils prefer to deliver the induction program approximately six weeks after the election so that new councillors have the opportunity to gain some practical experience first. However, this approach runs the risk of councillors not being effective or lacking confidence during the weeks preceding the induction training.

Alternatively, some councils choose to do a mixture of these approaches by staging the induction program over a number of weeks. Ultimately, the optimum timing for delivery of an induction program will vary depending on local circumstances.

### Content

A checklist of recommended content for induction programs for councillors and a supplementary program for mayors is provided at **Appendix D**.

There should be two core components of council's induction program:

- a knowledge-based component that ensures new mayors and councillors have the information they need to undertake their roles during the first few weeks of their term, and
- a team-building component designed to bring councillors together to form a collaborative, positive and united governing body.

### **Knowledge component**

In the first few weeks in particular, new mayors and councillors will need to know:

- their roles, responsibilities and legislative obligations
- what the council does and how the council operates, including an overview of integrated planning and reporting and land use planning
- their financial management responsibilities
- the key issues and tasks for the new council
- the legislation, rules, principles and political context under which councils operate
- the council's organisational structure and the roles and responsibilities of staff
- key council policies and procedures they must comply with
- the role of council meetings and how to participate effectively in them
- the support available to the mayor and councillors, and where they can go to get more information or assistance
- how to speak to the media appropriately and effectively, and
- information on the process for electing the mayor (where applicable).

Mayors will also need to know:

- the roles and responsibilities of the mayor as leader of the council, including ceremonial functions
- how to chair council meetings
- the role and functions of regional and other external bodies council is a member of
- how to oversee the general manager, including understanding recruitment processes and leading performance reviews
- how to lead council's integrated planning and reporting, and
- how to manage code of conduct complaints about the general manager.

### **Team building component**

Team building activities should be held, where necessary, depending on the relationships that exist between councillors and how they are likely to function as a team. The activities should aim to ensure mayors and councillors, as a governing body, understand the need to:

- build relationships with each other based on trust and mutual respect
- contribute to a positive and ethical culture within the governing body
- encourage and facilitate collaboration with each other
- work towards consensus as members of the governing body for the benefit of the community
- win concessions without damaging relationships within the governing body
- champion and communicate the council's vision and strategic plans as a cohesive team
- respect the diversity of skills and experiences on the governing body, and
- communicate and uphold the decisions of council in a respectful way, even if their own positions are not adopted.

Activities should also help the mayor, as the leader of the governing body, to:

- act as a stabilising influence and show leadership, and
- promote a culture of integrity and accountability within council and when representing council in the community and elsewhere.

## Structure and delivery

Each component of the induction program should be presented by the person who is best able to deliver the content and achieve the outcomes sought. This could be the general manager, another staff member or an external provider. Previous or current mayors or councillors may also be invited to provide an overview of their experiences on council, as might an experienced former or current mayor from outside the council.

The induction program should be conducted in a way that avoids the mayor and councillors being overloaded with information, particularly if this is at the expense of team building. This may be achieved by limiting the length of sessions, having a number of short sessions rather than one longer session and/or through the use of a range of delivery modes and materials.

Some councils structure their councillor induction programs intensively over two or more days – possibly a weekend – while others choose to hold shorter, evening sessions over several weeks. Others choose a combination of these two approaches.

When planning and delivering their induction programs, councils may consider making use of resource sharing arrangements with other councils, including Joint Organisations or Regional Organisations of Councils. For example, one part of the induction may be provided at the regional level to cover the more generic and regional issues, and another part within the council may cover local issues, policies and procedures. Printed and face-to-face training resources could also be utilised.

The Office of Local Government also offers ‘Hit the Ground Running’ workshops, held shortly after each council election, which councils may wish to include in their induction program.

Consideration should be given to which delivery method, or combination of methods, would best suit the information being conveyed and the different learning styles of councillors. Options could include:

- intensive blocks over two or more days (including weekends)
- evening or dinner sessions over several weeks
- a mix of regional and local level induction sessions
- informal briefings from the general manager and other senior staff
- guest speakers and presenters from other councils, state government agencies or other local government groups
- a guided tour of the council’s administration building/s, depot, council facilities and local government area
- in-house workshops by council staff and/or professional training providers
- seminars and conferences
- panel discussions
- a mock council meeting or meetings
- training booklets and discussion papers distributed to councillors to work through at their own pace, and/or
- online information and training resources.

Where possible, presentations should be supported by written materials, including an induction manual or handbook that councillors can retain and refer to.

## Induction manual

Councils should develop an induction manual or handbook to support councillors in the first weeks following the commencement of the council’s term of office. This resource may also include relevant background reference material for the longer term, and printed or online resources specifically developed for new councillors. It could also include a copy

of the Councillor Handbook which has been developed by the Office of Local Government for councillors. The induction handbook may be provided prior to, at or after induction training.

How the information is presented in the induction manual will affect how useful it is. For example, some councils have found that a manual is most likely to be used if the information is presented in a folder. Some councils may consider also providing the information as an online resource. An online resource may be easier for councils to keep updated and can make topic searching easier for users.

**Appendix E** provides a checklist of the content that could be included in an induction manual or online resource. Recommended content includes:

- basic information about the council
- profiles (demographic, economic etc.) of the local government area
- information about council meetings
- key planning and policy documents and information
- key legislation
- information about support for councillors, and
- other useful resources, such as Bluett's Local Government Handbook NSW, and/or details about where they may be accessed.

It is suggested that online resources include hyperlinks to electronic versions of any plans, policies or other documents referred to in the councillor induction manual.

## Cost

The cost of the induction program should be budgeted for within the council's councillor induction and professional development budget.

## By-elections

Under the Regulation, an induction program must also be delivered by a council for any newly elected mayor or councillor who joins the council as a result of a by-election to fill a casual vacancy.

## Evaluation

Council should evaluate the induction program to determine what elements worked well and whether there were any deficiencies that need to be addressed.

The methodology for the evaluation should be determined when the induction program is being developed to ensure that relevant data is collected. At a minimum, the evaluation should assess whether the induction program resulted in councillors and the mayor:

- understanding the need to build trusting and positive relationships with a common purpose as a team of councillors
- understanding the need to build a cohesive and positive culture for the governing body
- understanding the need to build a positive working relationship with the general manager and other staff
- understanding their roles and the roles of internal and external stakeholders, and feeling confident in their ability to perform their roles
- understanding key council information and how council works
- being aware of all relevant legislation and council policies and procedures, and being committed to complying with them
- understanding the key issues and tasks for the new council
- being able to make informed and effective decisions from the start of their term in office
- being able to effectively participate in council meetings and apply meeting rules correctly from the start of their term in office
- being able to fulfil their integrated planning and reporting responsibilities, including financial management responsibilities
- knowing how to speak to the media appropriately, and
- feeling confident in understanding and using financial information to manage council's finances.

In the case of the mayor, being able to:

- act as a stabilising influence and show leadership in times of crisis
- build a positive working relationship with the general manager
- oversee the general manager, including leading recruitment processes and performance reviews
- chair council meetings
- undertake his or her ceremonial functions
- lead the council's integrated planning and reporting, and
- manage code of conduct complaints about the general manager.



## Part 5:

# Professional Development Program for Mayors and Councillors



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## Benefits of a professional development program for mayors and councillors

Ongoing professional development for mayors and councillors is an investment which will enhance the effectiveness of a council's performance in achieving its goals.

The benefits of an ongoing professional development program for councillors and mayors include:

- mayors and councillors representing their communities to the best of their ability
- mayors and councillors feeling confident and supported in their roles
- the governing body making decisions based on a full understanding of all the key issues and consequences
- improved performance of council overall
- greater understanding of, and compliance with, legal responsibilities
- better management of the council's finances and resources, and
- mayors and councillors developing skills and knowledge that they can take into their personal and professional lives.

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## Enshrine commitment in council policies

Each council needs to enshrine its commitment to the ongoing professional development of mayors and councillors in all relevant council policies. This will ensure that this commitment is embedded in council's values and operations, and that an effective ongoing professional development program is implemented.

## Policy on the provision of expenses and facilities to councillors

Each council's ongoing professional development program should be accommodated by and reflected in its councillor expenses and facilities policy. The expenses and facilities policy should make clear and adequate provision for relevant training and professional development activities as legitimate expenses.

## Other mechanisms

Councils may also wish to consider other mechanisms to reinforce their commitment to ongoing professional development for the mayor and councillors, and they may wish to develop a structured approach for realising this commitment in practice.

This may be done through developing and adopting a resolution or a charter as a statement of commitment to support ongoing professional development for the mayor and councillors.

Alternatively, councils may wish to develop and adopt a councillor training and professional development policy. A model policy is provided in **Appendix F**.

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## Development of a training and professional development plan

As part of council's professional development program, council should develop a professional development plan for the mayor and each councillor. The plan should be developed in consultation with the mayor, each individual councillor and the governing body as a whole, and the general manager.

Depending on the needs of the council and the governing body, council's professional development program could comprise:

- generic activities delivered to all councillors which address the needs of council (identified in council's needs analysis), with a supplementary program for the mayor, or
- an individualised program for each councillor or mayor which caters to their specific professional development needs, and which addresses the skills and knowledge gaps that the councillor or mayor is identified as having, or
- a generic program that offers activities to meet council's skill and knowledge requirements, supplemented with individual activities to meet the specific needs of individual councillors or groups of councillors and the mayor.

The program can span the council's term, with individual activities implemented over time according to priority.

## Needs analysis

The first step in creating a professional development plan is to identify any gaps in the knowledge and skills required by the mayor and each councillor to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively. These needs should be assessed individually for the mayor and each councillor, and for the governing body as a whole.

To do this, each council will first need to conduct a needs analysis prior to each new council term to determine what knowledge and skills their mayor and councillors must have to effectively serve their local community.

The knowledge and skills listed in **Appendix G**, together with any additional needs a council may have (for example, specific services or particular environmental, social or economic challenges facing their community), should form the basis of this needs analysis.

## Assessment of skills and knowledge gaps

Once the council has determined the knowledge and skills required of the mayor and councillors, an assessment should be undertaken of what skills and knowledge the mayor and each councillor bring to their roles. The assessment should identify areas where they require development. This should be done for both new and experienced mayors and councillors.

Council, the mayor and councillors can use information obtained through a range of activities to identify any gaps. Examples of information sources include: self-assessments, questionnaires, councillor feedback, observations during council meetings and workshops, and interviews.

Any deficit identified through the assessment process should form the basis of the professional development plans for the mayor and councillors.

## Structure and timing

Councillors' professional development plans should outline:

- the outcome of council's needs analysis
- the knowledge and skills the councillor or mayor brings to their role
- the development needs of each councillor or mayor
- the priority given to each development need
- how the knowledge or skill will be developed (i.e. on-the-job training, mentoring, internal training, external training, briefing session etc.)
- timeframes for development
- who is responsible for organising training/development
- approval processes, and
- estimated costs.

The timing of the delivery of each component of the professional development plans for the mayor and councillors should be designed in such a way so as to not overload councillors with learning activities in the early part of council's term. The timing should reflect what knowledge and skills councillors and the mayor need at various points in council's term to undertake their roles.

For example, council should ensure that the mayor and councillors have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively contribute to the review of the community strategic plan and the development of the delivery program before these activities are undertaken.

## Delivery

A range of delivery methods and materials should be used to support the training and development needs of the mayor and councillors, recognising the varied learning styles councillors may have. These could include:

- in-house workshops, seminars and briefing sessions conducted by the council with appropriate staff, trainers and guest speakers
- workshops, seminars and conferences for mayors and councillors offered by external training providers and industry bodies
- printed material, including training booklets and discussion papers, that may be distributed to councillors for information, and
- online training courses and webinars.

Councils could also consider making use of resource sharing arrangements with other councils, including Joint Organisations and Regional Organisations of Councils.

Each councillor's professional development plan should outline possible delivery methods for each training need identified.

## Cost

Each year the council should allocate a budget to support professional development activities to be undertaken in that year. Progress against expenditure of the budget allocation should be reported on a quarterly basis as part of the budgetary cycle.

Councils will need to determine the size of the budget allocation, which may change annually, depending on training needs. It is to be expected that costs will be higher in the first year of council's term due to the need to deliver candidate information sessions and the induction program. The delivery program financial estimates and the Long Term Financial Plan will reflect the varying training and development budget requirements over the term of the council.

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## Evaluation

As with the pre-election information session and the councillor induction program, the professional development program should be evaluated to assist the council to determine the program's effectiveness and to identify areas of possible improvement.

The outcomes of the professional development program should, at a minimum, include councillors and mayors demonstrating the core skills and knowledge areas listed in council's needs analysis.

The evaluation should assess whether these outcomes were achieved.

# Part 6:

# Public Reporting



Holding elected office in a council is a role that carries with it significant responsibilities. All holders of elected offices in councils owe it to the communities that entrust them with this responsibility to ensure that they hold and maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to exercise their functions effectively on behalf of the community.

Mayors and councillors are ultimately accountable to the community that elects them for the performance of their functions. For this reason, councils are required to publicly report on the activities offered to the mayor and each councillor as part of induction and professional development programs and their participation in those activities.

In the case of induction programs, the general manager must prepare a report for the first council meeting held after the induction program is delivered. The report must identify the activities offered to the mayor and each councillor as part of the induction program and indicate whether they participated in them.

In the case of ongoing professional development programs, general managers must prepare a report to the first council meeting held after 30 June in each year. The report must identify the professional development activities offered to the mayor and each councillor in the year to 30 June and indicate whether they participated in them.

The general manager is also required to ensure these reports are published on the council's website.

Under the Regulation, the Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government may, at the request of a general manager, exempt a council from the requirement to publish details of induction and professional development activities offered to the mayor or an individual councillor where he or she is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances.

Such an exemption would be likely to be granted in circumstances where the public reporting of a development activity offered to a mayor or councillor would cause them undue embarrassment, may serve to deter them from identifying a training or development need, or where there are other compelling public interest grounds not to do so.

**Appendix H** of these Guidelines provides a suggested template for public reporting on participation in induction and ongoing professional development program activities.

# Appendix A:

## Guiding Principles for Councils



## General principles (section 8A(1))

Councils should:

- provide strong and effective representation, leadership, planning and decision-making
- carry out functions in a way that provides the best possible value for residents and ratepayers
- plan strategically, using the integrated planning and reporting framework, for the provision of effective and efficient services and regulation to meet the diverse needs of the local community
- apply the integrated planning and reporting framework in carrying out their functions so as to achieve desired outcomes and continuous improvements
- work cooperatively with other councils and the state government to achieve desired outcomes for the local community
- manage lands and other assets so that current and future local community needs can be met in an affordable way
- work with others to secure appropriate services for local community needs
- act fairly, ethically and without bias in the interests of the local community, and
- be responsible employers and provide a consultative and supportive working environment for staff.

## Decision-making principles (section 8A(2))

Councils should:

- recognise diverse local community needs and interests
- consider social justice principles
- consider the long-term and cumulative effects of actions on future generations, and
- consider the principles of ecologically sustainable development

Council decision-making should be transparent and decision-makers are to be accountable for decisions and omissions.

## Community participation principle (section 8A(3))

Councils should actively engage with their local communities, through the use of the integrated planning and reporting framework and other measures.

## Principles of sound financial management (section 8B)

Council spending should be responsible and sustainable, aligning general revenue and expenses.

Councils should:

- invest in responsible and sustainable infrastructure for the benefit of the local community
- have effective financial and asset management, including sound policies and processes for:
  - performance management and reporting
  - asset maintenance and enhancement
  - funding decisions, and
  - risk management practices
- have regard to achieving intergenerational equity, including by ensuring that policy decisions are made after considering their financial effects on future generations, and by ensuring that the current generation funds the cost of its services.

## Integrated planning and reporting principles (section 8C)

Councils should:

- identify and prioritise key local community needs and aspirations and consider regional priorities
- identify strategic goals to meet those needs and aspirations
- develop activities, and prioritise actions, to work towards the strategic goals
- ensure that the strategic goals, and the activities developed to work towards them, may be achieved within council resources
- regularly review and evaluate progress towards achieving strategic goals
- maintain an integrated approach to planning, delivering, monitoring and reporting on strategic goals
- collaborate with others to maximise the achievement of strategic goals
- manage risks to the local community or area or to the council effectively and proactively, and
- make appropriate evidence-based adaptations to meet changing needs and circumstances.



**Appendix B:**  
**Roles and Responsibilities**  
**Under the Act**



## Governing body of a council (section 223)

The mayor and councillors collectively comprise the governing bodies of councils. The role of the governing body is to:

- direct and control the affairs of the council in consultation with the general manager
- provide effective civic leadership to the local community
- ensure as far as possible the financial sustainability of the council
- ensure as far as possible that the council acts in accordance with the principles prescribed under the Act and the council's plans, programs, strategies and policies
- develop and endorse the community strategic plan, delivery program and other strategic plans, programs, strategies and policies
- determine and adopt a rating and revenue policy and operational plans that support the optimal allocation of the council's resources to implement the council's strategic plans and for the benefit of the local area
- keep the performance of the council under review, including service delivery
- make decisions necessary for the proper exercise of the council's regulatory functions
- determine the process for the appointment of the general manager and for monitoring their performance
- determine the senior staff positions within the organisation structure of the council
- consult regularly with community organisations and other key stakeholders and keep them informed of the council's decisions and activities, and
- ensure that the council acts honestly, efficiently and appropriately.

The governing body is to consult with the general manager in directing and controlling the affairs of the council.

## Individual councillors (section 232)

Councillors are individually and collectively accountable to the local community for the performance of the council. Each councillor has a responsibility to:

- be an active and contributing member of the governing body
- make considered and well informed decisions as a member of the governing body
- participate in the development of the council's integrated planning and reporting framework
- represent the collective interests of residents, ratepayers and the local community
- facilitate communication between the local community and the governing body
- uphold and represent accurately the policies and decisions of the governing body, and
- make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform the role of a councillor.

## The mayor (section 226)

The mayor is often considered the voice of the council and the leader of the community. While the mayor has the same roles and responsibilities as councillors, the mayor is essentially the "first among equals" and is expected to exercise a leadership role within a council. This leadership role is reflected in the mayor's extra responsibilities.

The role of the mayor is to:

- be the leader of the council and a leader in the local community
- advance community cohesion and promote civic awareness
- be the principal member and spokesperson of the governing body, including representing the views of the council in regard to its local priorities
- exercise, in cases of necessity, the policy-making functions of the governing body of the council between meetings of the council

- preside at meetings of the council and ensure that meetings of the council are conducted efficiently, effectively and in accordance with the Act
- ensure the timely development and adoption of the council's strategic plans, programs and policies
- promote the effective and consistent implementation of the council's strategic plans, programs and policies
- promote partnerships between the council and key stakeholders
- advise, consult with and provide strategic direction to the general manager in relation to the implementation of the council's strategic plans and policies
- in conjunction with the general manager, ensure adequate opportunities and mechanisms for engagement between the council and the local community
- carry out the civic and ceremonial functions of the mayoral office
- represent the council on regional organisations and at inter-governmental forums at the regional, state and commonwealth levels
- in consultation with the councillors, lead performance appraisals of the general manager, and
- exercise any other functions of the council that the council determines.



**Appendix C:**  
**Candidate Information Session**  
**Content Checklist**



Topic Area	Suggested Content
Role of council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role and responsibilities of local government</li> <li>• The guiding principles under the Act that govern council's functions</li> <li>• The purpose of council and committee meetings</li> </ul>
Roles and responsibilities of councillors and staff under the Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The roles and responsibilities of the governing body and individual councillors under the Act, including in relation to integrated planning and reporting</li> <li>• The roles and responsibilities of the mayor as leader of the governing body, including oversight of the general manager</li> <li>• The strategic nature of the roles of elected members compared to the operational roles of the general manager and council staff</li> <li>• The regional and other bodies the council is a member of and the roles of those bodies</li> </ul>
Legal and ethical responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement to take an oath of office</li> <li>• Requirement to meet the ethical standards prescribed under the Act, including managing pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests</li> <li>• Outline of the legal responsibilities of councillors under the Act and their personal responsibilities under other legislation, for example in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- work health and safety</li> <li>- anti-discrimination</li> <li>- privacy</li> <li>- public access to information</li> <li>- records management</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Outline of any council policies that councillors will be expected to comply with, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- councillor and staff interaction policy</li> <li>- code of meeting practice</li> <li>- code of conduct</li> <li>- councillor expenses and facilities policy</li> <li>- gifts and benefits policy</li> <li>- councillor induction and professional development policy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Topic Area	Suggested Content
Skills and knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in council’s councillor induction program</li> <li>• Participation in the mayor’s supplementary induction program</li> <li>• Expected attendance at council meetings, their frequency and possible duration</li> <li>• Preparation required for council meetings, for example:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– attending pre-meeting briefings</li> <li>– reading business papers</li> <li>– ensuring councillors have a full understanding of issues requiring decisions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Potential participation in other meetings, for example extraordinary council meetings, regional bodies, external bodies</li> <li>• Potential attendance at community events, ceremonies and other functions</li> <li>• Responding to media requests and inquiries</li> <li>• Potential participation in formal community consultation processes</li> <li>• Answering letters, emails and phone calls from residents and ratepayers as well as participating in regular informal conversations</li> <li>• Participation in any other activities that are likely to arise and require the mayor or councillors’ time</li> </ul>
Support available to assist councillors in the role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The annual fees paid to councillors and the mayor</li> <li>• Council’s policy on the payment of expenses incurred and the provision of facilities and resources to the mayor and councillors</li> <li>• Induction and professional development programs for councillors and the mayor</li> <li>• The responsibility of the general manager and staff to provide timely information and advice and the administrative and professional support necessary for councillors to effectively discharge their functions.</li> </ul>



**Appendix D:**  
**Induction Program**  
**Content Checklist**



Topic Area	Suggested Content
Establishment of a well-functioning governing body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team building activities to help councillors and the mayor:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identify how they would like to work together as a team</li> <li>- understand why each councillor is in office and help identify a common purpose and bond between councillors</li> <li>- identify a common vision for the governing body</li> <li>- identify what a successful term in office will look like for council and the community and what is needed from individual councillors and the mayor to achieve this</li> <li>- identify accepted values and behaviours</li> <li>- build relationships with each other based on trust and mutual respect</li> <li>- contribute to a positive and ethical culture within the governing body</li> <li>- value and develop teamwork and collaboration skills</li> <li>- work towards consensus as members of the governing body for the benefit of the community</li> <li>- win concessions without damaging relationships within the governing body</li> <li>- develop respectful negotiation and conflict resolution skills</li> <li>- champion and communicate the council's vision and strategic plans as a cohesive team</li> <li>- respect the diversity of skills and experience of the other members of the governing body</li> <li>- communicate and uphold the decisions of council in a respectful way, even if their own position was not adopted</li> <li>- understand what supports or undermines the effective functioning of the governing body</li> <li>- identify appropriate council meeting practice and behaviours</li> <li>- understand their opportunities for influence</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Orientation to council facilities and local government area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided tour of the council facilities available to councillors, for example, chambers, offices, utilities</li> <li>• Guided tour of the local government area including council facilities, significant sites and projects</li> <li>• Introduction to council staff to help build a positive team culture between the governing body and administration (whilst respecting the legislated separation between the two)</li> </ul>

Topic Area	Suggested Content
Overview of the key issues and tasks for the new council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The demographic profile of the local government area</li> <li>- Council's current social and economic health and performance</li> <li>- The key social, environmental and economic concerns facing the community</li> <li>- The key issues and tasks the new council will need to address</li> <li>- Any issues faced by previous councils or useful historical information that may impact or assist the new council</li> <li>- The current community strategic plan and the process that led to its development, including its role in informing the new council's activities</li> <li>- Council's current delivery program, operational plan, resourcing strategy and community engagement strategy</li> </ul>
Legal and political context of local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The relationship of state and commonwealth governments to local government</li> <li>• The guiding principles under the Act that govern council's functions</li> <li>• The roles and responsibilities of oversight agencies such as the:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Office of Local Government</li> <li>- Department of Planning and Environment</li> <li>- Environment Protection Authority</li> <li>- Audit Office</li> <li>- Independent Commission Against Corruption, and</li> <li>- NSW Ombudsman</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Roles and responsibilities of councillors and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The roles and responsibilities of the governing body and individual councillors under the Act</li> <li>- The role and responsibilities of the mayor</li> <li>- The roles and responsibilities of the general manager and council staff</li> <li>- Council's policy on councillor and staff interaction and how councillors can request assistance from staff</li> <li>- The regional and other bodies the council is a member of and the roles of those bodies</li> <li>- Delegations</li> <li>- Integrated planning and reporting responsibilities</li> </ul>
Overview of the key functional areas of council operations and staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council's organisational structure</li> <li>• The role and responsibilities of each business unit within council, for example:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- planning and other regulatory functions</li> <li>- assets and infrastructure</li> <li>- financial management</li> <li>- community services</li> <li>- governance</li> <li>- teams responsible for implementing key council policies, strategies or programs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Council's workforce strategy</li> </ul>

Topic Area	Suggested Content
<p>Legal and ethical responsibilities and risk management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation for taking the oath or affirmation of office</li> <li>• Requirement to meet the ethical standards prescribed under the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW, including disclosing and managing pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests</li> <li>• The legal responsibilities of councillors under the Act and their personal responsibilities under other legislation, for example in relation to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- work health and safety</li> <li>- anti-discrimination</li> <li>- privacy</li> <li>- public access to information</li> <li>- records management</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Council policies that councillors will be expected to comply with, for example:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- councillor and staff interaction policy</li> <li>- code of meeting practice</li> <li>- code of conduct</li> <li>- councillor expenses and facilities policy</li> <li>- gifts and benefits policy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Participation in the councillor induction and professional development program</li> <li>• How the council manages risk, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- council’s risk management framework</li> <li>- the role of the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee</li> <li>- internal audit</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Decision-making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purpose of council meetings</li> <li>• Prescribed meeting rules</li> <li>• Council’s code of meeting practice</li> <li>• The role of the chair</li> <li>• How to use closed meetings appropriately</li> <li>• What an orderly, effective and efficient council meeting looks like and how it is conducted</li> <li>• How councillors should prepare for a council meeting, including pre-meeting briefings</li> <li>• The role of business papers and meeting minutes and how to understand and interpret them</li> <li>• The role of committees and how they are established and structured</li> </ul>

Topic Area	Suggested Content
Strategic planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The statutory requirements for integrated planning and reporting</li> <li>• How integrated planning and reporting is conducted by council including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- council's integrated planning and reporting frameworks, timelines and processes</li> <li>- the mayor's and councillors' roles</li> <li>- community consultation and participation</li> <li>- change management processes</li> <li>- reporting mechanisms</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Land use planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of the land use planning system, including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- relevant legislation</li> <li>- the role of council in land use and development approvals</li> <li>- how development applications are considered and decided by council, including independent panels</li> <li>- the role of environmental planning instruments and how to interpret them</li> <li>- delegations</li> <li>- the role of oversight agencies, for example, the Department of Planning</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Natural resource management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council's public land management responsibilities and regulatory frameworks</li> <li>• Council's natural resource management responsibilities and regulatory frameworks</li> </ul>
Financial processes and financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The responsibility of councillors for the financial management and sustainability of the council under the Act</li> <li>• Council's long-term financial plan and other components of council's resourcing strategy</li> <li>• How to interpret and understand the financial information contained in financial reports prepared by council</li> </ul>
Customer services and complaints handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council's complaints handling process and how councillors should handle constituents' concerns</li> </ul>
Support available to assist councillors in the role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The annual fees paid to councillors and the mayor</li> <li>• Council's policy on the payment of expenses incurred and the provision of facilities and resources to the mayor and councillors</li> <li>• Ongoing professional development for the mayor and councillors</li> <li>• The responsibility of the general manager and staff to provide timely information and advice and the administrative and professional support necessary for councillors to effectively discharge their functions</li> </ul>
Supplementary topics for mayor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to be an effective leader of the governing body and the council</li> <li>• The role of the chair and how to chair council meetings</li> <li>• How to manage code of conduct complaints about the general manager</li> <li>• How to conduct day-to-day oversight of the general manager</li> <li>• How to lead recruitment and performance reviews of the general manager</li> <li>• Citizenship and other ceremonial functions.</li> </ul>



**Appendix E:**  
**Councillor Induction Manual**  
**Content Checklist**



Topic Area	Suggested Content
Governing body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of the shared purpose, goals, vision and success markers identified by the governing body during the induction process</li> <li>• Summary of the values and behaviours identified by the governing body during the induction process that will characterise the council term</li> </ul>
Basic information about the council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational chart and outline of key function and service areas, including those of senior staff</li> <li>• Information and/or chart showing the relationships between councillors and council staff and decision-making processes</li> <li>• List of council facilities and map of the local government area</li> </ul>
Profile of the local government area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wards</li> <li>• Population statistics</li> <li>• Useful information about the local government area</li> <li>• Useful information about key issues or tasks for the new council</li> </ul>
Information about council meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of meeting practice</li> <li>• Agenda and minutes of recent meetings</li> <li>• Meeting times and venues</li> <li>• Deadlines related to meetings, business papers and minutes</li> <li>• List of council committees and their composition</li> </ul>
Key planning and policy documents and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated planning and reporting documents, for example, the current community strategic plan, delivery program, operational plan, community engagement strategy and resourcing strategy etc.</li> <li>• Delegations</li> <li>• Most recent annual report</li> <li>• End-of-term report of last council</li> <li>• Code of conduct</li> <li>• Policy on the provision of councillor expenses and facilities</li> <li>• Policy on access to information</li> <li>• Policy on councillor and staff interaction</li> <li>• Policy on gifts and benefits</li> <li>• Council's workforce strategy</li> <li>• Council's risk management framework and relevant audit- and risk management-related documents</li> <li>• Other relevant plans, policies and procedures</li> <li>• Policy register/list of policies</li> </ul>

Topic Area	Suggested Content
Key legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of key legislation or relevant excerpts from legislation such as the Act and the Regulation</li> <li>• List of key legislation under which council exercises its functions, for example:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i></li> <li>- <i>Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</i></li> <li>- <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i></li> <li>- <i>State Records Act 1998</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• How to access up-to-date versions of the legislation online (<a href="http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au">www.legislation.nsw.gov.au</a>)</li> </ul>
Information about support for councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to make a request or claim under council's expenses and facilities policy</li> <li>• Information about the induction and professional development program</li> <li>• Contact details of council officer/s that councillors may contact for information</li> </ul>
Other useful resources and/or details about where they may be accessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction program presentations and materials</li> <li>• Contact details for key organisations such as the Office of Local Government and Local Government NSW</li> <li>• A copy of useful publications such as the Councillor Handbook and the Meetings Practice Note and Bluett's Local Government Handbook NSW.</li> </ul>



**Appendix F:**  
**Model Councillor Training**  
**and Development Policy**



## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate X Council's commitment to ensuring that the mayor and councillors have access to training and educational opportunities which will assist them to develop and maintain the skills and knowledge required to effectively perform their civic role and responsibilities under the *Local Government Act 1993* ('the Act').

## Scope

This policy applies to all councillors of X Council, including the mayor.

## Policy

### Statement of commitment

X Council is committed to developing an induction and ongoing professional development program for the mayor and councillors to ensure they can fulfil their statutory roles and responsibilities. As part of this program, the general manager will work with the mayor and each councillor to develop a professional development plan that identifies and addresses the specific gaps in skills and knowledge that the mayor and councillors and/or Council has recognised as needing attention.

### Induction program

X Council will develop an induction program for new and returning councillors as well as a supplementary program for the mayor to ensure they are provided all the information they need to effectively fulfil their roles in the first few months of Council's term and feel confident in their ability to do so. The induction program will cover:

- their roles, responsibilities and formal obligations
- what the council does and how the council operates, including an overview of integrated planning and reporting and land-use planning
- their financial management responsibilities

- the key issues and tasks for the new council
- the legislation, rules, principles and political context under which councils operate
- Council's organisational structure and the roles and responsibilities of staff
- key Council policies and procedures they must comply with
- the role of Council meetings and how to participate effectively in them
- the support available to the mayor and councillors and where they can go to get more information or assistance,
- how to speak to the media appropriately and effectively, and
- information on the process for electing the mayor (where applicable).

In the case of the mayor, the program will also cover:

- the role and responsibilities of the mayor as leader of the council, including ceremonial functions
- how to chair Council meetings
- the roles and functions of regional and other external bodies Council is a member of
- how to oversee the general manager, including understanding recruitment processes and leading performance reviews
- how to lead Council's integrated planning and reporting, and
- how to manage code of conduct complaints about the general manager.

The mayor and councillors must have a working knowledge and understanding of these areas by the end of the induction program.

The induction program will also include activities to help the governing body establish itself as a cohesive and collaborative team focused on a common purpose with shared values and goals. Activities will aim to ensure mayors and councillors, as a governing body, understand the need to:

- build relationships with each other based on trust and mutual respect

- contribute to a positive and ethical culture within the governing body
- encourage and facilitate collaboration with each other
- work towards consensus as members of the governing body for the benefit of the community
- win concessions without damaging relationships within the governing body
- champion and communicate the council's vision and strategic plans as a cohesive team
- respect the diversity of skills and experiences on the governing body, and
- communicate and uphold the decisions of Council in a respectful way, even if their own position was not adopted.

Activities should also help the mayor, as the leader of the governing body, to:

- act as a stabilising influence and show leadership, and
- promote a culture of integrity and accountability within Council and when representing Council in the community and elsewhere.

The mayor and councillors must attend all induction sessions when first elected. Returning councillors (including the mayor) must also attend all induction sessions to ensure the effective and cohesive operation of the governing body.

X Council will evaluate the induction program at the end of each Council term to determine whether it has achieved these outcomes, and to identify and address areas for improvement.

## Assessment of skills and knowledge

The minimum skills and knowledge required of councillors to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively are listed at the end of this policy. Council will conduct a needs analysis prior to each new term to determine whether this list is appropriate and whether it reflects Council's needs.

An assessment will be made of the skills and knowledge each councillor brings to their role against these minimum requirements to identify any gaps that their professional development plan should address.

To identify any gaps, Council will obtain this information through activities such as self-assessments, questionnaires, councillor feedback, observations during Council meetings and workshops and interviews.

## Ongoing professional development program

A professional development plan will be developed for the mayor and each councillor to address the gaps identified. The plans will include:

- the outcome of Council's needs analysis
- the knowledge and skills the councillor or mayor brings to their roles
- the development needs of each councillor or mayor and the priority given to each development need
- how the knowledge or skill will be developed (i.e. on-the-job training, mentoring, internal training, external training, briefing session etc.), and
- operational information such as timeframes for development, who is responsible for organising training/development, approval processes and estimated costs.

Training activities may include:

- in-house workshops and briefing sessions conducted by the council with appropriate staff, trainers and guest speakers
- attendance at external training courses and events, for example, seminars, conferences and workshops
- practical on-the-job training
- printed materials such as training booklets
- mentoring and/or
- online training resources.

The professional development plans are to be developed in consultation with the mayor, each individual councillor and the governing body as a whole, and the general manager.

X Council will evaluate the professional development program at the end of each council term to assess whether it was effective in assisting the mayor and councillors to develop the skills and knowledge listed in Council's needs analysis.

## Responsibilities

The mayor and each councillor are responsible for making themselves available to attend any development activities identified in the professional development plan. The mayor and all councillors must make all reasonable endeavours to attend and participate in the induction sessions and professional development activities arranged for them during the term of the council.

[Identify the role or responsible staff member] is responsible for planning, scheduling and facilitating induction and professional development sessions for the mayor and councillors in consultation with the general manager.

The general manager has overall responsibility for X Council's induction and professional development program.

## Notification of induction and professional development activities to the mayor and councillors

The mayor and councillors will be provided with as much notice as possible for upcoming induction and professional development activities.

## Budget

An annual budget allocation will be provided to support the training and professional development activities undertaken by the mayor and councillors. Expenditure will be monitored and reported quarterly.

## Approval of training and/or expenses

The mayor and councillors are encouraged to identify professional development opportunities and may seek approval from the general manager to attend any such activities.

Approval of training and payment and reimbursement for expenses relating to a councillor's registration and attendance at training, will be determined in accordance with X Council's Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy.

## Reporting

[Identify responsible team or unit] will maintain data pertaining to councillor induction and professional development activities and attendance.

The general manager of X Council will:

- report to the first Council meeting held after the induction program is delivered the activities offered to the mayor and each councillor as part of the induction program, and whether or not they participated in them
- report to the first Council meeting held after 30 June each year identifying the professional development activities offered to the mayor and each councillor in the year to 30 June and whether or not they participated in them, and
- publish these reports on Council's website.

**Appendix G:**  
**Skills and Knowledge Required**  
**by Councillors and Mayors**



The core skills and knowledge required by mayors and councillors to exercise their roles and responsibilities are listed below. These are drawn from the Municipal Association of Victoria's Councillor Competency Framework (but have been adapted to reflect NSW statutory and operational requirements) and the Local Government Capability Framework developed by Local Government NSW.

Additional attributes, skills and knowledge are included for mayors given the additional responsibilities of their roles under the Act. Induction and professional development in these areas can be included in the mayor's supplementary program if required.

## Highest priority

A ranking system has been applied to the skills, attributes and knowledge needed by councillors and mayors to reflect the influence each has on how successfully a person will be able to fulfil these roles.

To '**understand**' means to know and be able to apply this knowledge in a practical way without the assistance of others. This refers to the **knowledge** that a councillor or mayor must have and be able to apply if they are to be successful in their civic role.

To '**be able to**' means is capable of demonstrating in action without the assistance of others. This phrase is generally used in connection with the **personal attributes** or **skills** that a councillor or mayor must have in order to fulfil their roles effectively.

Skills, attributes and knowledge that mayors and councillors need to 'understand' or 'be able to' demonstrate are classified the **highest priority** because a councillor or mayor will not be able to fulfil their roles or responsibilities effectively if they do not know or are unable to apply this skill, attribute or knowledge in a practical way while performing their civic duties.

## Lower priority

To '**have knowledge of**' means to know that this information/policy exists and affects their role, and to be able to source more information or assistance if application is needed. These attributes, skills or knowledge are considered a **lower priority** as they can be acquired when needed.

**A. LEADERSHIP**

**Mayors and councillors**

**are able to:**

- fulfil their civic roles in accordance with the Act
- be positive and unifying members of the governing body
- provide effective and positive leadership to their community, as well as the council administration
- build relationships with a diverse range of people in the community
- listen to, understand and promote the interests of the community they represent, particularly on complex issues
- initiate, support and champion change in their community
- work with external stakeholders for the benefit of the community, including regional bodies, organisations, private businesses and other levels of government
- represent council and the community in the media effectively.

**understand:**

- the prescribed roles and responsibilities of the governing body, councillors and the mayor
- each of the guiding principles under the Act
- the key accountabilities of the council to the community, the NSW Government and oversight agencies.

**have knowledge of:**

- council’s media policy
- the regional and other bodies the council is a member of and the roles of those bodies.

**Mayors (additional)**

**are able to:**

- lead and unify the governing body, particularly through contentious issues and decision-making
- promote a positive community and council culture
- represent council at community events and on regional/ external bodies to the benefit of the community.

**understand:**

- the prescribed role and responsibilities of the mayor under the Act
- the mayor’s civic and ceremonial role and the functions they exercise under it
- how to be an effective leader.

## B. COMMUNICATION AND WORKING WITH OTHERS

### Mayors and councillors

#### are able to:

- communicate effectively with individuals and groups and adjust their communication styles to cater to different audiences
- work collaboratively and cooperatively with other councillors, the mayor, the general manager, council staff, external stakeholders and community members
- listen to others and ask appropriate respectful questions
- show sensitivity to religious and cultural differences
- be open to the advice of others and reflect on and integrate feedback
- negotiate and resolve differences respectfully and sensitively, with the aim of reaching consensus and finding common ground
- manage their emotions and remain objective in challenging situations.

#### understand:

- the functions of the general manager and council staff prescribed under the Act
- the different roles of the governing body and the general manager in relation to council's organisational structure and statutory requirements for consultation
- the governing body's responsibility for appointing the general manager and monitoring their performance
- the mayor's responsibility for exercising day-to-day oversight of the general manager and for leading performance reviews of the general manager
- the strategic nature of their role compared to the operational roles and responsibilities of the general manager and council staff
- the importance of good working relationships with the general manager to the effective performance of the council
- the responsibility of the general manager and staff to provide timely information and advice and the administrative and professional support necessary to effectively discharge their functions
- the council's adopted protocol for interaction with council staff
- how to forward constituent and other action requests or information requests to council staff
- their obligations under the council's code of conduct and the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* in their dealings with and behaviour towards the general manager and other council staff.

#### have knowledge of:

- the council's workforce management strategy
- each of the functional areas of responsibility of the council
- the general manager's contract of employment and the need for key performance indicators for the general manager to align with council's integrated planning and reporting goals
- the Guidelines for the Appointment and Oversight of General Managers.

**Mayors  
(additional)**

- are able to:**
- foster collaboration between councillors to build a unified governing body
  - support productive working relationships between the governing body and the general manager
  - guide debate towards achieving acceptable outcomes
  - build a productive working relationship with the general manager based on clear expectations, trust and respect
  - provide strategic direction and day-to-day oversight of the general manager
  - build partnerships between council and external stakeholders that are of strategic value to council and benefit the broader region.
- understand:**
- how to lead the general manager’s performance review and recruitment.

**C. ETHICAL CONDUCT AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Mayors and  
councillors**

- are able to:**
- follow all legislation, rules, policies and the code of conduct applicable to councillors and mayors
  - observe the highest standards of personal and ethical conduct at all times
  - be honest, transparent and accountable for their words, actions, decisions and behaviour
  - demonstrate council values
  - identify and manage different types of conflicts of interest
  - treat all people in the community equally
  - maintain confidentiality
  - contribute to a positive and ethical culture within the governing body
  - take responsibility and be accountable for fulfilling the roles of councillor and mayor to the best of their ability
  - uphold the principles of social justice.

- understand:**
- their ethical obligations under the council’s code of conduct
  - their obligations under council’s councillor expenses and facilities policy.

- have knowledge of:**
- the process for making and managing code of conduct complaints under the Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW
  - the consequences of a breach of council’s code of conduct
  - the definition of “corrupt conduct” under the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988* and the potential consequences of engaging in corrupt conduct.

**Mayors  
(additional)**

- are able to:**
- manage code of conduct complaints about the general manager
  - promote a culture of integrity and ethical conduct within council and when representing council in the community and elsewhere.

## D. GOVERNANCE

### Mayors and councillors

#### understand:

- what is good governance and its importance
- the statutory framework that applies to local government
- the role of the council's Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee and the role of internal audit

#### have knowledge of:

- council's statutory compliance and risk management frameworks
- council's obligations in relation to the management of council information under the *State Records Act 1988*, the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* and the *Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998* and understand their personal responsibilities under that legislation
- council's complaints management processes

## E. STRATEGIC PLANNING

### Mayors and councillors

#### are able to:

- contribute effectively to integrated planning and reporting at council
- contribute to and communicate the strategic plan, goals, priorities and vision for the community
- make resourcing and budget decisions and strategies to achieve these goals
- take account of the wider context and long-term impacts on future generations when considering options
- participate effectively in community engagement processes relating to strategic planning
- set performance goals that include quality measures, timeframes and budgets for delivery
- consider the impact of changes (e.g. government policy, economic conditions) on council's strategic plan and goals
- identify potential risks to the achievement of council goals and take steps to address these
- understand council performance reports and develop strategies to improve performance.

**understand:**

- the statutory requirements for integrated planning and reporting, including its conceptual basis and the guiding principles under the Act
- the relevance of integrated planning and reporting to the general principles and decision-making principles prescribed under the Act
- the prescribed roles and responsibilities of the governing body, individual councillors, the mayor and the general manager in relation to integrated planning and reporting
- the community strategic plan and the process that led to its development, as well as its role in informing council’s activities over the current term of the council
- council’s delivery program, operational plan, resourcing strategy and community engagement strategy
- the reporting mechanisms under the integrated planning and reporting framework and the importance of clear and measurable key performance indicators to ensure progress towards council’s goals can be measured.

**Mayors (additional)**

**are able to:**

- work with the general manager to translate the council’s strategic direction into a delivery program and operational plan
- continuously monitor progress against the delivery program and operational plan, ensuring the resourcing strategy is appropriate.

**F. DECISION-MAKING**

**Mayors and councillors**

**are able to:**

- make and uphold considered, timely and transparent decisions based on merit and the best interests of the community as a whole
- exercise good judgement
- research, understand and evaluate a wide range of information
- understand how to read and interpret council business papers and contribute constructively to debate in council
- work towards consensus as a member of the governing body for the benefit of the community
- weigh up the following when making decisions:
  - financial and budget implications (including value for money)
  - legislative and regulatory requirements
  - community and social impacts
  - environmental, social and economic sustainability
  - the wider context
  - the long-term impacts on future generations.

<b>Mayors</b>	<b>understand:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the purpose of council and committee meetings</li> <li>• the meeting rules prescribed under the Act and the council's code of meeting practice</li> <li>• how to use closed meetings appropriately</li> <li>• the importance and attributes of orderly, effective and efficient meetings, and their individual roles in creating these types of meetings</li> <li>• the importance of preparing for meetings, including attending pre-meeting briefings and reading business papers</li> <li>• recognise the role of the Chair.</li> </ul>
	<b>have knowledge of:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the committee structure adopted by the council and the functions of each of the council's committees</li> <li>• the delegations made by the council.</li> </ul>
	<b>are able to:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lead constructive, orderly council meetings with a view to reaching consensus.</li> </ul>
	<b>understand:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their role and responsibilities as Chair.</li> </ul>

## G. LAND-USE PLANNING AND REGULATORY FUNCTIONS

<b>Mayors and councillors</b>	<b>are able to:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make appropriate land-use planning and development approval decisions.</li> </ul>
	<b>understand:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the role of the council in relation to land use planning and development approvals.</li> </ul>
	<b>have knowledge of:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> and relevant land use planning concepts</li> <li>• the environmental planning instruments that apply to the council's area and the development control plans adopted by the council</li> <li>• the role of the Minister for Planning, the Department of Planning and Environment and the Greater Sydney Commission (where relevant) in relation to land use planning</li> <li>• the development assessment and approval process and the statutory criteria prescribed under section 79C of the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i></li> <li>• the delegations made with respect to development assessments and approvals</li> <li>• the role of Joint Regional Planning Panels and Independent Hearing and Assessment Panels in relation to development approvals.</li> </ul>

## H. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

### Mayors and councillors

#### are able to:

- use basic financial terminology and demonstrate an understanding of recurrent and capital spending
- interpret information in council's financial reports
- make informed contributions to debate about the allocation of financial resources to community priorities
- display an awareness of financial risk and exposure and solutions to mitigate these
- identify and discuss the implications of council's long-term financial plan, audited financial statements and budget reviews.

#### understand:

- the statutory responsibility of the governing body to ensure as far as possible the financial sustainability of the council
- the statutory responsibility of the governing body to determine and adopt a rating and revenue policy and operational plans that support the optimal allocation of the council's resources for the benefit of the local area
- the guiding principles of sound financial management under the Act
- council's long-term financial plan and other components of the council's resourcing strategy
- financial reporting requirements
- their responsibilities in relation to the review and approval of capital expenditure
- the statutory principle that councils should manage lands and other assets so that current and future local community needs can be met in an affordable way.

#### have knowledge of:

- council's revenue sources
- the role of external audit and the Audit Office
- the tendering requirements under the Act and their responsibilities in relation to the acceptance of tenders.

## I. ENVIRONMENTAL AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

### Mayors and councillors

#### are able to:

- meet their obligations as custodians of council and community assets.

#### understand:

- the council's public land management responsibilities and the statutory requirements that apply to public land management
- the importance of sound asset management and its impact on council finances
- asset management planning requirements
- the council's natural resource management responsibilities and the regulatory frameworks under which it exercises its functions.

#### have knowledge of:

- the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- council's asset management strategy.



# Appendix H:

## Reporting Template





