

Title of Policy	SMRC 405 – Councillor Training		
Responsible Department	Governance	Document Register ID	250.2017.405.1
Policy Owner	Group Manager Governance	Review Date	September 2019
Date of Council Meeting	30 August 2017	Resolution Number	180/17
Legislation, Australian Standards, Code of Practice	Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) - Section 232 Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 Office of Local Government Circulars 07/22 and 09-36 Office of Local Government Councillor Development Strategy		
Aim	To assist Councillors to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform the role of councillor.		

1 Objective

This policy has been established to help Councillors with the responsibility prescribed in Section 232 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, “to make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform the role of councillor”.

It has also been established to help Council ensure that councillors have access to training and educational opportunities to enable them to clearly understand their role and responsibilities and to develop and maintain the skills and knowledge to perform their job well and in the best interests of the community they represent.

2 Background

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

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

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

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

Benefits of a councillor induction program include:

- enables councillors to quickly become familiar with how the council works, the ‘rules’ under which a council operates and the complexities of the role
- provides an opportunity to set a positive tone
- establishes clear roles and responsibilities
- builds positive working relationships from the outset.

Benefits of a professional development program include:

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

3 Definitions

In this Policy, the following definitions apply:

LGA	Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)
Policy	Councillor Training and Development Policy
OLG	Office of Local Government
Training	Educational and/or Development and/or Training Opportunities

4 Application of Policy

This Policy applies to Councillors.

This Policy has been prepared with reference to:

- Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy
- Local Government NSW Training and Development Plan
- Office of Local Government Circulars 07/22 and 09-36 and Guidelines for the Payment of Expenses and the Provision of Facilities to Mayors and Councillors, and
- Office of Local Government Councillor Development Strategy.

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

5 Policy

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

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

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

5.1 Induction of Councillors

Preliminary induction training by councils should take place as soon as possible after the polls are declared following a new election and prior to the first council meeting. This should aim to provide Councillors with the basic information they need to function in their role, including in meetings.

Candidates for elections will be made aware of the proposed timetable for the induction program. Candidates may then make tentative arrangements to enable them to attend the induction program if they are elected.

The rest of the induction program should then be delivered within approximately two months of the polls being declared.

Suggested topics for an induction manual include:

- 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
- Other useful resources, such as Bluetts' Local Government Handbook NSW, and/or details about where they may be accessed.

Appendix A provides a checklist of the content that could be included in an induction manual or on-line resource. It is suggested that on-line resources include hyperlinks to electronic versions of any plans, policies etc referred to in the councillor induction manual.

5.2 Commitment to Continuing Professional Development for Councillors

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

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

Training offered to Councillors will be classified as:

- Imperative,
- Desirable, and
- Developmental.

5.3 Imperative Training

Training offered to Councillors is considered imperative when:

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

- Good governance.

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

5.4 Desirable Training

Training offered to Councillors is considered “desirable” when:

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

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

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

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

5.5 Skills and Knowledge Self-Assessment Tool

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

Important skills:

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

Knowledge of:

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

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

5.6 Developmental Training

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

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

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

Council considers that the following topics are considered important for Councillors’ continuing development.

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

5.7 Minimum Training Requirements

The minimum requirements for Councillor training are:

- Internal Councillor Induction Sessions, and
- Councillor Information Seminars as delivered by OLG, LGNSW or other appropriate training providers.

5.8 Budget

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

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

5.9 Approval of Training Payment of Expenses

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

Guidelines for the Payment of Expenses and the Provision of Facilities for Mayors and Councillors in NSW – October 2009, written by the Division (now Office) of Local Government and the Department of Premier and Cabinet states:-

2.3.2 Training and development Councils should provide for training and development in their policies and make separate provision in their budgets for the payment of training and development expenses for councillors. This is in accordance with NSW Government policy, which aims to ensure that councillors have adequate training and skills development to ensure they carry out their functions effectively. The Division of Local Government is currently implementing a Councillor Development Strategy to ensure that councillors have access to the training and resources needed to understand and undertake their role effectively and to facilitate continuing professional development opportunities. Councils are also being encouraged to develop, fund and implement a councillor training and development program based on a systematic skills analysis and assessment of professional development needs of their councillors. The nature of this program will vary from council to council depending on resources and need. Guidance on the preparation of professional development programs for councillors may be found in the Division's Councillor Induction and Professional Development Guide on our website at www.olg.nsw.gov.au

Councillor expenses and facilities policies should support and encourage an active learning process and skills development in addition to providing for attendance at seminars and conferences related to council functions. It is essential where council is paying these expenses that the training or educational course is directly related to the councillor's civic functions and responsibilities.

5.10 Notification to Councillors

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

5.11 Recording and Reporting

The data to be maintained will include:

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

Data that is required by legislation will be published in the Annual Report.

Reports relating to training for Councillors will be made available at any other times, by the request to Council, Mayor or General Manager.

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

Appendix A

Councillor Induction Manual – Content Checklist

Induction Manual	
Topic Area	Suggested Content
Basic information about the council	✓ Composition and structure
	✓ Organisational chart
	✓ Key function and service areas, senior staff and contacts
	✓ Information and/or chart showing the relationships between councillors and council staff and decision making process
	✓ Council facilities and LGA map
Profile of the local government area	✓ Population statistics, land use, business use and major features
Information about council meetings	✓ Agenda and minutes of recent meetings
	✓ Meeting times and frequency, venues, deadlines and delivery of minutes
	✓ Council committees and their composition
Key planning and policy documents and information	✓ Current Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program, Operational Plan and Resourcing Strategy
	✓ Most recent annual report
	✓ End of Term report of last Council
	✓ Code of conduct
	✓ Meetings code of practice
	✓ Policy on the provision of councillor expenses and facilities
	✓ Delegations
	✓ Policy on access to information
	✓ Other relevant plans, policies and procedures
	✓ Policy register/list of policies
Key legislation	✓ Advise where a copy of key legislation or relevant excerpts from legislation such as the Local Government Act 1993 and the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 is available
	✓ List of key legislation under which councils have governance responsibilities (for example, the EP&A Act and the POEO Act) as well as personal responsibilities under legislation (for example, the WH&S Act and the State Records Act)
	✓ How to access up-to-date versions of the legislation on line (www.legislation.nsw.gov.au)
Information about support for councillors	✓ Councillor expenses and facilities and how to make requests and claims
	✓ Training and skills development needs assessment
	✓ Training and skills development programs
	✓ Contact details of council officer/s that councillors may contact for information
Other useful resources and/or details about where they may be accessed	✓ Induction program presentations and materials
	✓ Contact details for key organisations such as the Office of Local Government and Local Government NSW.
	✓ A copy of useful publications such as the Office and Association's joint publication, Councillor Guide, OLG Circulars and how councillors may subscribe to mailing list, and Bluett's Local Government Handbook NSW

Appendix B

Skills and Knowledge Self-Assessment – Checklist for Councillors

The following is a list of the key skills and knowledge areas of effective councillors. This list will identify some possible training and developmental areas for you as a councillor and will assist council to prioritise the training and development opportunities provided to councillors.

If you consider that you possess the characteristic to a satisfactory level, place a tick in the check-box.

Important skills:

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

Knowledge of:

- Federal, State and Local Government relationships
- How local government councils operate
- Role of a councillor
- Councillor, General Manager and staff relationships
- Code of Conduct and conflict of interests
- Key aspects of the Local Government Act 1993
- Environmental planning and assessment processes
- Whole of community representation
- Social justice principles
- Meeting regulations and procedures
- Strategic management planning and reporting
- Financial management requirements in the Local Government Act and
- Local Government (General) Regulation and reporting processes
- Asset management
- Knowledge of the demographic profile of my council area and the social, environmental and economic issues facing my community

Appendix C

Further Opportunities for Councillor Professional Development

1. Local Government NSW (LGNSW)

As the peak organisation representing elected representatives in NSW, the Association provides a range of professional development and training opportunities to its members.

As a service to its members, the Association provides professional development and training specifically catering to the needs of councillors to assist them to understand their role and enhance their skills.

The public workshops are delivered in large regional centres, as well as in metropolitan areas and for Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs).

In house workshops at the council's own premises and weekend workshops are also available.

Workshop facilitators are experts in their field and have proven experience in the local government industry. The workshops are based on good practice adult learning principles and practice with opportunities for participants to be active learners and to be able to reflect on their experiences.

The Association's Councillor Professional Development Program includes the following modules:

- Elected life – An essential Induction for NSW Local Government Councillors
- Asset Management for Councillors
- Climate Change Training for Councillors
- Conflict of Interest & the Model Code of Conduct
- Community Leadership
- Councillors as Change Initiators
- Development Approvals – the Heritage Perspective
- Dynamic Presentation Skills
- Effective Chair in Local Government (half day)
- Effective Meeting Skills
- Engaging with the Community
- Financial Issues in Local Government
- Good Governance
- Handling Difficult People for Councillors
- Long Term Strategic and Financial Planning
- Managing Time and Stress
- Media Skills (basic and advanced programs available)
- Mediation Skills for Councillors
- Performance Management of Senior Staff
- Pitching for Success
- Planning Legislation Skills and Knowledge
- Preventing Bullying and Harassment for Councillors
- Speed Reading Skills for Councillors
- Strategic Management
- Understanding Sustainability for Councillors

The Association's learning arm, Learning Solutions, also offer executive coaching for councillors as well as in-house training tailored to an individual council's needs.

A comprehensive calendar of workshops in Sydney and in regional areas and details about the content of these programs are available on the Association's website at www.lgnsw.org.au

2. Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) (now hosted by University of Technology: Centre for Local Government (UTS:CTS)

The Centre is funded by the Australian Government. Its mandate is to enhance professionalism and skills in local government, showcase innovation and best practice, and facilitate a better-informed policy debate. The Centre aims to build on existing programs and networks and offers the Excellence in Local Government Leadership Program nationally.

Further information can be obtained from the University of Technology's website www.uts.edu.au

3. Local Government Training Institute

This division of Hunter Councils Inc offers a range of local government specific short courses for councillors as well as council staff and members of the public.

Further information can be obtained from www.lgti.com.au

4. Australian Institute of Company Directors

This national organisation for directors' mission is to make a difference in the quality of governance and directorship and offers Governance Essentials for Local Government, a local government sector-specific version of the Foundations of Directorship program.

Further information can be obtained from www.companydirectors.com.au

Variation

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this policy and should be reviewed periodically to ensure it is relevant and appropriate.