

Councillor Learning and Development Policy

Objective

Council will foster a culture of continuous learning and development. It will provide equal access to diverse educational opportunities for councillors. This will enhance councillor knowledge and skills in line with standards and expectations. It will empower councillors to fulfill their official duties and functions.

1. Policy purpose

The Councillor Learning and Development Policy (the Policy) supports Council's commitment to equal access to learning and developmental opportunities for councillors. This will maintain and/or increase their knowledge and skills based on standards and expectations.

Appropriate learning and development is important to support councillors in the effective performance of their official duties and functions.

In accordance with this Policy, and any legislative requirements, councillors are to undertake ongoing learning and development activities during their term in office.

When councillors are elected to office, they take an Oath or Declaration of Office which includes:

- carrying out functions and exercising powers to the best of their ability and in accordance with the law;
- complying with the Code of Conduct;
- engaging in ongoing professional development; and
- abiding by principals of good governance.

Continuous learning by councillors is an investment. It enhances the skills and knowledge of individual councillors. It helps the Council to achieve its goals. Well informed councillors are best placed to represent the interests of their community.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all councillors, including mayors and deputy mayors.

3. Principles

Councillor learning and development is based on the following principles.

Councillor learning and development:

1. increases councillor capabilities to effectively fulfil their roles and responsibilities in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act) and other relevant legislation;
2. activities should support capability development as identified through the Councillor Capability Review and Development plan (described below);
3. consists of different formats of activities that increase a councillor's skills and knowledge and provides opportunities to network and learn about local government;

4. is supported by Council through documented processes for funding, approving and monitoring learning and development activities;
5. supports fairness, equity, accessibility, and consistency in decision-making for all councillors;
6. funding is only used for approved purposes; and
7. is reported on annually to promote participation of councillors, raise community awareness, and provide transparency and accountability for Council's expenditure on learning and development.

4. Councillor Learning and Development Framework

A. Councillor capabilities

The Policy recognises the unique role and responsibilities of councillors and the capabilities that are required to fulfil that role. The core capabilities include:

- Behaviour
- Relationship building
- Civic leadership
- Legal compliance and accountability
- Strategic planning
- Financial and resource management

Councillors are decision-makers and participants in policy process. They are not expected, or required, to hold specialist technical knowledge about Council activities. Councillors must build their competencies in core capabilities. This will ensure that they can make informed decisions for their community and act in accordance with the law.

Councillors come from diverse backgrounds and have varying levels of competencies in the core capabilities. This Policy supports the development of each councillor's competency through learning and development activities. It also encourages continuous development throughout the term.

B. Activities to increase capabilities

The following applies to both new and returning councillors. It is important that all councillors operate from a uniform knowledge base and have the opportunity to learn about changes in local government.

Reading/writing and digital literacy

Councillors will have opportunities to improve reading, writing and digital literacy skills so that they can take part in learning activities.

Council induction

Council will deliver a comprehensive councillor induction program. This will assist councillors to understand and perform their role. It will build on the existing knowledge and skills of returning councillors.

Post-election sessions

Councillors are encouraged to attend any post-election workshops/seminars. Such as those by the Office of Local Government (OLG) or the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT).

Council work-based activities

Councillors learn and develop through work-based activities. For example: coaching, on-the-job training, workshops, and face to face training sessions.

Relationship-based learning activities

Relationship-based learning is about building positive and supportive relationships to facilitate learning/ It also promotes the well-being of councillors.

The process of building relationships also has positive impacts on a councillor's ability to build relationships with community members. This makes them better placed to represent their views in Council.

Activities can include:

- community of practice;
- mentoring;
- networking events;
- emotional intelligence training;
- team building; and
- other relevant activities.

Online modules

Councillors are to complete the Framework's online learning modules before completing their Review of capabilities and learning and development plan.

Conferences

Conferences can provide learning and development and networking opportunities.

C. Review capabilities and learning and development plan

Councillors should self-assess their skills and knowledge in relation to the core capabilities. They should acknowledge their strengths and areas for improvement. A councillor's learning and development plan should identify learning and development activities to increase the councillor's skills and knowledge in capabilities.

A review of councillor capabilities and the creation of a Learning and Development Plan:

- a) consists of:
 - i. addressing the councillor core capabilities as outlined in Part 4A of this Policy through:
 - assessment against each of the councillor core capabilities; and
 - identification of opportunities and activities to improve competencies in each core capability.
 - ii. identifying areas of interest beyond the core capabilities relating to the activities of Council. Such activities would increase the capability of the councillor to fulfill their official duties and functions;
- b) is to be completed within the first three months after elected to Council and reviewed at least every 12 months; and
- c) is to be undertaken with the Mayor, General Manager or an independent person engaged by the Council.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Mayor and councillors

The Mayor and councillors are responsible for:

- completing a review of their capabilities and learning and development plan within three months of being elected;
- reviewing their progress every 12 months with the appropriate facilitator (Mayor, General Manager, or an independent person engaged by the Council);
- participating in learning and development opportunities provided by Council and others; and
- promoting the importance and value of continuous learning.

The Mayor is expected to mentor and encourage councillors to participate in learning and development.

General Manager

The General Manager is responsible for:

- Council's induction program;
- the ongoing learning and development of councillors through other activities;
- facilitating the completion and compliance of each councillor's review of the councillor capabilities and learning and development plan; and
- operational matters related to learning and development budgets, processing requests, reporting and any other relevant matter.

6. Funding

Council will budget to facilitate councillor learning and development. This budgeted expense does not include Council's existing induction expenses.

Councils are to allocate annually:

- \$2,000 per councillor; and
- \$3,000 per Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Approval for learning and development activities should be supported by documentation in the councillor capabilities and learning and development plan.

Council will budget to contribute to the cost of maintaining and developing the Local Government Learning and Development Framework which has been developed by the Office of Local Government and Local Government Association of Tasmania.

7. Approvals, expenses, and claims

Learning and development activities to be paid for by Council must be approved by the General Manager in accordance with Council's [insert name of relevant Councillor Expenses Policy].

Council will pay for the cost of councillors to attend Council approved seminars, conferences and training programmes. This includes accommodation and travel expenses as approved by [Insert as agreed by the Council or for example: the General Manager once approved in writing by the Mayor].

8. Compliance

A. Non-compliance with legislation

Report disputes or alleged non-compliance by a councillor with their obligations under the Act or relevant local government legislation to the General Manager. If the matter isn't resolved by the General Manager then notify the Director of Local Government.

B. Non-compliance with or disputes about the Policy

Refer disputes about the Policy to the General Manager. If the councillor and the General Manager cannot reach an agreement, report the matter to Council for consideration.

9. Annual reporting

The Annual Report of Council will include:

- the operation of this Policy;
- the completion of learning and development activities from councillors' individual Learning and Development Plans; and
- expenditure allocated and used for learning and development activities of councillors.

10. Review

This Policy will be reviewed every four years and not later than 24 months after an ordinary local government election. It may also be reviewed if required during the term of Council.