

Learn to Lead

in local government

Report on Consultation Feedback – Councillor Learning and Development Framework

Consultation 3 April – 29 May 2024

November 2024 | Version 1.2

Table of Contents

- Table of Contents..... 2
- About the Local Government Learning and Development Framework 3
- Report summary 3
- About the consultation process..... 3
- Consultation feedback and response 5
 - 1. Identifying barriers and encouraging participation in the Framework 5
 - Feedback 5
 - Response 6
 - 2. Councillor Capabilities 8
 - Feedback 8
 - Response 9
 - 3. Model Councillor Learning and Development Policy 10
 - Feedback and responses 10
 - 4. Councillor Capability Review and Development Plan 13
 - Feedback and responses 13
 - 5. Learn to Lead website 15
 - Feedback and responses 15
 - Other matters 16
 - Feedback 16
 - Positive feedback 17
- Implementation plan 18
- Conclusion..... 18
- Attachments..... 19

About the Local Government Learning and Development Framework

The Local Government Learning and Development Framework (the Framework) has been created to support councillors in undertaking their complex and challenging roles. The Framework's development is being guided by a collaborative Governance Group, comprising the Office of Local Government (OLG), the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT), elected members and council officers.

The Framework incorporates a variety of learning methods and is based on the 70:20:10 model of learning, which comprises a combination of:

- on-the-job or work-based learning activities (70%);
- coaching, feedback and the establishment of networks and relationships for learning (20%); and
- formal – or classroom / workshop style learning activities (10%).

Report summary

In April and May 2024, the Office of Local Government gathered feedback from Tasmanian councillors and council officers in relation to the Framework, so that the Framework and its component parts are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the sector.

Many participants provided positive feedback regarding the Framework, highlighting that it is heading in the right direction. Feedback also revealed some barriers to participation, such as time constraints, confidence in councillors' own knowledge, and difficulties with digital skills. Suggestions to overcome these barriers included providing incentives, improving accessibility, and offering personalised learning plans.

The consultation reinforced the need to commit to continuous learning and professional development for councillors, ensuring they have the skills needed to serve their communities effectively.

Based on the feedback received, several changes have been made to the learning and development materials consulted on to ensure they are useful, accessible and relevant for councillors going forward. These materials will be promoted by LGAT and made available for councils to use. Other actions have been included in an Implementation Plan (refer to Attachment 1).

The Governance Group will oversee any improvements and actions and provide updates to the sector as they are completed.

About the consultation process

A targeted consultation process was run with councillors, general managers and council staff from 3 April 2024 – 29 May 2024 seeking feedback on five focus areas below:

1. identifying barriers and encouraging participation in the Framework;
2. Councillor Capabilities - describing councillor skills and behaviours;
3. A Model ‘Councillor Learning and Development Policy’ (Policy);
4. A Councillor Capability Review and Development Plan (Review and Plan) template; and
5. the [Learn to Lead](#) website.

Feedback was collected through online surveys and feedback sessions, emails and meetings with councils:

| Method | Number of submissions, attendees, forums |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Online survey | 37 |
| Email | 2 |
| Online feedback sessions | 44 |
| Attendance by OLG at workshops | 2 Council Workshops 1 General Managers’ Workshop |

Individuals who provided feedback will not have their submissions published or be identified as this was not a public consultation process.

The consultation questions focussed on what needed to change to make improvements to selected elements of the Framework. The feedback provided included suggestions for enhancements to the Framework going forward along with positive feedback on what was already working well.



Consultation feedback and response

1. Identifying barriers and encouraging participation in the Framework

Feedback

The three main **barriers** to participation identified were:

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Time constraints | Balancing multiple demands can affect councillors' availability to undertake learning activities. |
| Confidence in knowledge | Already feeling well-informed can reduce openness to undertake Framework learning activities provided. |
| Digital competency | Difficulties with computer skills can hinder engagement with online learning. |

Other barriers mentioned included:

- branding – *Learn to Lead* may be considered misleading, as councillors may feel they lead already;
- politically challenging – councils raised concern that funding councillor training might be at odds with community expectations; and
- appropriate channel – it was suggested that the Framework isn't the appropriate way to impart knowledge/experience to councillors.

Suggestions for **encouraging participation and reducing barriers** included:

Provide incentives:

- Recognition through – certificates, presentations at council meetings, reporting and publishing completion of activities, qualifications (e.g. AICD), recognised prior learning (RPL), and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) points.
- Require completion within a certain time frame.
- Withhold allowance until modules completed.

Support different ways of learning:

- Face to face sessions, group sessions including with other councils or buddying with another councillor.
- Written information, videos, webinars.
- Use of plain English, other languages, voice-overs.
- Instructions for use of read-aloud applications for people with disability.

Foster both reading, and writing literacy and digital literacy:

- Provide Framework familiarisation training.

Deliver a more efficient Learning Management System (LMS):

- Incorporate a capability to track progress, provide easier log in access and better navigation through modules.

Offer support and encouragement:

- From the mayor and general manager.
- Through appropriate mentors, these could be from another council.
- Provide technical support on weekends e.g. password reset.
- Provide internet access at council chambers.

Improve communication:

- Use different methods – SMS, phone calls, email.
- Send reminders for learning module completion.
- Provide clear instructions about activities.

Response

Ways to promote participation and inclusion in the Framework and reduce barriers were identified through consultation. Some of them are already included in the Framework workplan. For example, providing learning activities in different formats, and addressing accessibility. There are already handouts available of each module that can be printed from the Resource Page in each Learning Package on the LMS. The other suggestions have been added to an Implementation Plan (refer to Attachment 1) so that they can be addressed in the Framework going forward.

Time constraints were identified as a main barrier. This may be reduced in future council terms once the Framework is fully developed. At that time, councils will be able to consider what they need to provide in their induction and education programs to complement the Framework. It was noted that some councils provided detailed induction programs following the last election when the online modules were not available. This may have led to councillors having to cover the same topics in induction and the online modules.

Enabling each councillor to have a specific and relevant learning plan based on their needs could also reduce the amount of time spent undertaking learning activities.

Councils who adopt a Policy, recognise the efforts of councillors who participate in learning activities and encourage continuous learning may help address barriers such as community and councillor attitudes when they do not value or see the need

for ongoing learning for councillors. In addition, the Framework will be fully developed before the next election. This will demonstrate to potential candidates the importance placed on learning the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill the role of councillor.

The Governance Group decided on the Learn to Lead branding for the Framework. They have since endorsed graphic devices and the Learn to Lead website to promote the Framework with that branding.



2. Councillor Capabilities

Feedback

Feedback received at the facilitated sessions unanimously supported the identified capabilities as being relevant and applicable to a councillor’s role. The online survey responses were more varied, but still showed overall support as follows:

| Capability | Feedback confirming capability was ‘spot on’ or ‘mostly applied’ |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Behaviour | 81% |
| Relationship building | 89% |
| Civic leadership | 78% |
| Legal compliance and accountability | 65% |
| Strategic planning | 75% |
| Financial and resource management | 62% |

Some participants provided suggestions that were already in the capability document. That feedback is not included in the following.

One participant suggested reducing the number of indicators and another to provide examples of inappropriate and appropriate behaviours.

Other suggestions related to the behavioural indicators includes:

- **Behaviour:**
 - add:
 - be a lifelong learner;
 - chairperson knows how to manage meetings;
 - working and engaging with council officers;
 - change:
 - title to ‘constructive behaviour;’
 - ‘do not make personal reflections about other councillors or employees in meetings’ to ‘do not make personal reflections about other councillors or employees;’
- **Relationship building:**
 - add:
 - community consultation and how to communicate with the community;
 - use appropriate language;
 - open communication outside of formal meetings to build trust;
 - constructive participation;

- communicate with others who don't think the same;
 - able to resolve conflict;
- **Civic leadership:**
 - add:
 - justification of actions and accountability of decisions;
 - stewardship;
- **Legal compliance and accountability:**
 - add:
 - understand workplace health and safety and psychosocial safety responsibilities;
 - understand how to participate in meetings, e.g. using motions appropriately;
 - land-use planning and acting as a planning authority;
- **Strategic planning:**
 - define the difference between strategic and operational planning;
- **Financial and resource management:**
 - add:
 - understanding of financial risk to meet objectives in strategic documents;
 - asset management and depreciation;
 - ability to read performance indicators; and
 - change 'manage' to more appropriate term e.g. read, understand, oversee.

Response

The feedback was reviewed and considered by the Governance Group. The capability framework document has been updated accordingly (refer to Attachment 2).

Providing examples of inappropriate and appropriate behaviours has been added as an action to the Implementation Plan (refer to Attachment 1).

3. Model Councillor Learning and Development Policy

Feedback and responses

Most respondents did not want material changes made to the proposed Model Policy; however, there were a range of questions and suggestions provided on specific areas of the Policy. Responses to these are included as able below.

Include the following in the Policy:

- digital skills;
- useful links;
 - Response - Useful links can be added to the Policy by individual councils as appropriate. Links to resources will also be added to appropriate platforms such as the Learn to Lead website or LMS.
- timeframe for completion of learning activities following council election;
- clarify work-based and relationship-based learning;
 - **Response** - Work-based and relationship-based learning have not been further clarified in the Policy. These different formats and activities will be clearer to individuals as they are made available and councillors have the opportunity to participate in them. Councils can then add further detail to the Policy if needed.
- make the approval process easy, e.g. not through a council meeting;
- avoid jargon and use plain English;
- mandatory post-election induction sessions and completion of learning activities and a penalty if not completed;
 - **Response** - Mandatory completion of learning activities and associated penalties can only be achieved through legislative amendments, not through this Policy. However, there is support for mandating training in previously agreed reforms and recommendations from the Future of Local Government Review. These changes may be introduced at a later date.
- distinguish between levels of expertise, e.g. what knowledge is needed to fulfill the role and what knowledge is considered technical or specialist knowledge;
 - **Response** - Distinguishing between levels of expertise is best achieved through approved learning and development activities. This includes the online learning modules. The general manager is also well placed to provide information to councillors as this may differ across councils.
- reimburse councillors if attending learning activities during times that they would normally be doing paid work; and

- **Response** - The ability for a council to reimburse councillors if they attend learning activities during times that they would normally be doing paid work would require a legislative amendment or to be approved by council. This matter has been added to OLG's list of potential legislative amendments for future consideration.
- review policy not later than every two years.

Specific feedback about funding provisions in the Policy:

- it is a good idea to allocate funds as a requirement in the Policy;
- is this amount flexible?
- will it be indexed?
- can the funding be banked and carried over to different years in the term?
- different councils have different capacities;
- \$2,000 is not enough, should be more like \$2,500 for councillors and \$4,000 for the mayor; and
- don't ask councils to fund their own learning and development as allowance is low and councils are struggling financially.
 - **Response to all of the above** - The comments related to funding will be taken on notice and further addressed through the Governance Group.

Other questions and responses:

Question: Is this a standing policy?

- **Response** - Many councils already have a policy, or parts of it, that are similar to this Policy. This Policy is provided for guidance and councils can amend it as appropriate. At this stage it is not mandatory however, it is recommended.

Question: What supporting tools are there?

- **Response** - The capability framework, Review and Plan, Learn to Lead website and online learning modules are all tools that support the Policy. As the Framework is further developed other tools will be provided as appropriate.

Questions:

What support will be given to the general manager when they review a councillor's capabilities if there is a difference in opinion?

Should/could the role of arbiter/reviewer be shared between the mayor and the general manager?

What are the roles and responsibilities of the mayor in disputes? Do all mayors have enough experience to mentor and lead? What happens if the mayor is causing problems?

- **Response** - the council can choose who is best placed to facilitate and review councillor capabilities. This person may be the general manager, the mayor or an independent person. It is acknowledged in some instances the mayor or general manager may need education or training to gain suitable skills e.g. if a mayor is new to their role. This training may also include communication skills such as conflict resolution, giving feedback or negotiation. Ultimately, the choice of a facilitator is up to the council.

How do we know if the modules do anything?

- **Response** - The Governance Group responsible for the development of the Framework has representatives from Councils (councillors and staff), LGAT and OLG who can advocate for the sector. Opportunities to evaluate the Framework and ensure it is meeting the needs of the sector and is fit for purpose will be ongoing.

Amendments to the Policy:

Suggested changes to the Policy have been considered by the Governance Group. The Policy has also been reviewed for readability. The updated Policy is provided at Attachment 3.



4. Councillor Capability Review and Development Plan

Feedback and responses

Feedback on the Councillor Review and Plan (the Plan) was generally positive and included suggestions for enhancing the Plan. Specific questions about the Plan and responses are provided below.

Suggestion: the review and plan should be mandatory to ensure take up and completion.

- **Response** - Mandatory completion of the Review and Plan can be achieved through legislative changes. It can also become an expectation of the council and community if the council adopts the Policy which includes completion of the Review and Plan.

Questions/Suggestions:

Will self-assessment lead to inconsistency/fabrication of responses?

Include capacity for council officers and peers to provide respectful feedback.

- **Response** - Whether individuals will be honest when completing a self-assessment of their capabilities depends on various factors. Personal integrity, fear of repercussions, and self-awareness play significant roles. The context of the self-assessment, such as its purpose and anonymity, also influences honesty. It may be helpful to provide training on self-assessment techniques, use structured assessment tools, and incorporate feedback from others to ensure a more accurate evaluation.

Suggestion: Review capabilities quarterly or six monthly through a facilitated group session.

- **Response** - The Policy states that capabilities are to be reviewed annually. It would be a matter for individuals or the council if reviews were to be carried out more regularly.

Suggestions:

It is not the mayor's role to assess capabilities of other councillors.

An external facilitator should be used for capability reviews;

What happens if the mayor is not fulfilling their role?

Who approves training for mayor?

- **Response** – Questions about the facilitator have been answered above.

Suggestion: This information should be provided to candidates before nominating.

- **Response** - The capabilities, Policy and Review and Plan will be published on an appropriate platform such as the Learn to Lead website or LMS. They can also be referred to in the updated pre-election training for candidates. This has been added to the Implementation Plan (refer to Attachment 1).

Suggestion: Timeframes to complete activities should be included.

- **Response** - A column has been added to the Review and Plan (refer to Attachment 4) to indicate completion dates for activities.

Question: Could this be trialled in a group of councils prior to being sector wide?

- **Response** - Implementation of the Review and Plan could be trialled in a group of councils. This has been added to the Implementation Plan for further consideration (refer to Attachment 1).



5. Learn to Lead website

Feedback and responses

During consultation, some participants commented on the Learning Management System (LMS) instead of the Learn to Lead website. Therefore, some of the feedback below may relate to the LMS and not the Learn to Lead website.

- enable councillors to upload other completed learning activities;
 - **Response** – substantial changes such as enabling individuals to upload data to the website in a useful way would come at a cost. This would require funding.
- show the individual learning journey;
- include links to other resources:
 - legislation, strategic planning, community consultation (iap2 or from NSW), other articles or papers, meeting procedures;
 - LGAT website/resources;
 - **Response** - The website's resource page can be updated to include useful links as suggested.
- ensure font size is accessible;
 - **Response** - The font size on the Learn to Lead website is accessible. The site can be zoomed in and maintains its structural integrity. Most web browsers also provide accessibility tools. Participants are encouraged to speak with their IT staff for assistance if needed.
- promote website prior to next local government election; and
 - **Response** - The Framework and its elements will be promoted prior to the next election.
- incorporate storytelling, compelling narratives and case studies using real-world examples of best practice.
 - **Response** - There is a news page that is currently hidden but could be used to incorporate storytelling and case studies.

Feedback requiring action has been added to the Implementation Plan (refer to Attachment 1).



Other matters

Feedback

Local government candidates:

- mandatory training in workplace health and safety and psychosocial safety and they should understand what they are committing to;
 - **Response** - Pre-election education and a communication campaign were available before the 2022 local government elections. The previous education and communication provided will be reviewed and updated and provided as a pre-election package in 2026. There was support for this to become mandatory in the Local Government Act reforms and the recommendations from the Future of Local Government Review.
- gender-based affirmative action in elections so that there are more female councillors to reduce inappropriate behaviour towards women; and
 - **Response** - Having a diverse council and a balance of genders that represents the community is ideal. The previous local government communication campaigns were designed to promote diversity including gender. Diversity in local government will continue to be promoted.

Councillors:

- increase allowances and reduce number of councillors to improve standards; and
 - **Response** - Councillor allowances are subject to review. However, this is outside of the scope of the Framework.
- should have at least one term in office before they can stand for mayor or deputy mayor.
 - **Response** – this has been added to the OLG register for potential legislative amendments. It will be considered at an appropriate time.

Learning Management System (LMS) and online modules:

- user issues with logging in, navigating and completing modules.
 - **Response** - The challenges with the LMS are known and is already an action on the Governance Group workplan. They will consider how this is best managed and funded to ensure councillors have a fit for purpose system.

State Government:

- why don't State Government politicians have to undertake compulsory learning and development?
 - **Response** - Education for State Government politicians would need to be addressed through the Tasmanian Parliament.

Positive feedback

Positive feedback was also provided in the consultation process. For example:

- there are talented people in local government;
- it's totally inclusive now;
- it's easily accessible now;
- no improvements needed;
- I believe that everyone was able and is able to access the learning activities;
- it's pretty clear and well laid out - no suggestions;
- the website is clear and easy to navigate;
- it worked well for me. Has something for everyone;
- concise, easy to navigate, and clear, the pathways are easy to follow, useful, and easy to access;
- juggling paid work, family, other community roles and council can be difficult. However, learning and keeping skills up to date is my priority so I make time;
- embrace lifelong learning;
- enjoyed modules as a lifelong learner;
- happy with the uptake as it's the first time;
- the Framework is put together well;
- broadly very supportive of the Learning and Development Framework;
- pleased that we have started. Asking for input is great;
- chin up, this effort to lift the capabilities of all Tasmanian councillors is a worthy cause!
- it is a great start and I am excited to see how it progresses.



Implementation plan

Feedback that is to be actioned has either been incorporated into relevant documents or added to the Implementation Plan (refer to Attachment 1). The completion of tasks on the Implementation Plan will be managed through the Framework's Governance Group. Progress will be reported through the Governance Group's Communique and evaluation reports (if appropriate).

Conclusion

The consultation process has helped improve the Framework so that it serves councillors better. The feedback identified challenges and offered solutions, helping to refine the Framework.

Key barriers to participation have been identified, such as time constraints and digital skills, and methods to address them have been added to an Implementation Plan. Positive feedback showed that the Framework is on the right track and is a valuable tool for councillors.

The Governance Group will continue to drive the actions in the Implementation Plan, monitor progress, and ensure the Framework remains useful for councillors across Tasmania. By promoting a culture of learning and development, the Framework will help councillors improve their skills, leading to better governance and service delivery for the Tasmanian community.

Attachments

1. Implementation Plan – Learning and Development Framework Consultation
2. Councillor Capabilities, Descriptors and Behavioural Indicators
3. Model – Councillor Learning and Development Policy
4. Model – Councillor Capability Review and Development Plan