

Local Government Cultural Review Submission

Supporting leadership competencies and capabilities

Leadership experience and capability – these questions relate to how roles could be better defined and how leadership skills could be built and maintained

Question 1 - The Local Government Act 2020 defines leadership roles and responsibilities. Does this require further role clarity? If so, which aspects require clarification and how may this be achieved (including legislative and non-legislative mechanisms)?

- Mandatory training requirements were a good start, could be further enhanced
- Online mandatory candidate training was inadequate, too basic, didn't get a real sense of what is involved in being a Councillor, understanding of duties and time commitments, role and effort
- More formal induction required by Councillors after the general election
- Mayoral Induction should be mandatory
- Require further clarification on distinction between CEO and officers
- Be clear in training that Councillors need to be strategic and not operational, and thus similar to the role of a board
- Observation Councillors and Executive Leadership working well together

Question 2 - Given the diversity and experience of candidates' backgrounds, how can the local government sector improve leadership capability and better cultivate an environment of transparency, honesty, integrity and trust?

- First two weeks of new Council intensive induction by CEO/Administration,
- Ongoing intensives to retouch on where everyone is at
- Ability to demonstrate diversity through election process, questionnaire and statement, rather than qualifications
- Continual professional development required, accreditation or 'licence' like CPA's, Engineers
- Need to know more about each other including background and skills, skills matrix of Councillors to help inform training needs, skills and capability matrix
- Identify ideal skills that a Councillor should have and develop professional development to support, require minimum professional development expectations
- More time for team building

- Hold forums for interested candidates
- Need to drive frank and fearless advice from staff
- Provide more opportunity to explain a decision, remove the formality of some of associated with Council meetings – drive accountability

Question 3 - How successful have any existing initiatives been to promote strong leadership and build trust? Please provide case studies or examples of good practice that have worked well and could be considered for broader implementation.

- Specific Councillor Sessions or programs such as Council's transformation program, Budget weekend discussion, Chief Executive Officer Recruitment, have provided opportunities for Councillors to connect and work with each other on a different level to briefings. Suggestion for a social induction as a result of the success.
- Mayor and CEO meeting with Councillors is working well. Normally occurs after a briefing
- Councillor development weekend to build team trust and respect, in person events, it is acknowledged that the COVID environment has not been conducive to in person team building sessions.

Question 4 - Mention is made through consultation of local government being a 'parliament of opposition as opposed to a diverse board of the community'. What needs to change to better align Councillors and Mayors to effectively achieve community-based objectives and better operate as a diverse board of the community?

- Councillors are individuals
- Transparency in recording/livestreaming council meetings, community can see behaviour first hand, highlights behaviour
- Proper consultation, community lead panels have been a positive initiative
- Candidate training important to clarify that role and how to operate
- One table did not support this statement, politics to be removed from the chamber
- Single member ward disadvantages ability to be diverse
- Decrease in talent pool, need to increase geographic area too small

Councillor journey – these questions relate to the support and training that could be offered to Councillors

Question 5 - How could the candidate and induction training support be improved to ensure genuine engagement and sustained understanding of the role and responsibilities of Councillors?

- Buddy system
- Peer mentoring
- Diversity training
- Offer orientation
- Needs to be tailored training eg planning and in partnerships with other sectors
- Develop more basic training than AICD
- Access/leverage the Governance Institute training
- Expand and strengthen pre-election mandatory training ie. certification needs higher bar
- Must demonstrate community connection ie engaged
- Ballot questionnaire to demonstrate relevant experience, community understanding and connection
- Increase information to voters
- Prevention is better to attract right people who understand roles
- Community panel run by Council to require candidates to be put forward

Question 6 - How can the local government sector work to formalise a structured professional development pathway for Councillors and Mayors?

- Assessment to understand Capability and skills, develop matrix
- Minimum of four professional development subjects/sessions – to equal a number of hours
- Professional development expectations
- Training should lead to some form of qualification – earn points for example
- Local Government behind shift on training in other sectors eg. soft skills such as emotional intelligence
- Professional reviews

Question 7 - How can awareness be raised on the best ways to harness social media to ensure a consistent management approach – covering monitoring, appropriate usage, and the consequences of negative usage?

- Training on pros and cons, High court decision/comments, Defamation
- Act needs to change, explain responsibilities, need a specific section addressing responsibilities
- Election period is insufficient
- Important form of communication, but needs to be in accordance with code of conduct
- Need for Social media training & policy

Question 8: Do you think that any amendments to the Local Government Act 2020 are required to deal with the usage of social media? How should social media harassment be defined and what mechanisms could be introduced into the Act?

- Needs to be broad
- Incorporate in standards of conduct

Early intervention and effective dispute resolution – these questions relate to how poor behaviour can be dealt with when it arises

Question 9: In the context of leadership, what needs to change to empower elected representatives, CEOs, and Council staff, to call out poor Councillor behaviour and misconduct without fear of retribution?

- Option confidential discussion: 1. Mayor, 2. CEO, adhere to Code of conduct
- A Municipal monitor could attend a briefing once a year to provide feedback to Council
- Monitors could provide training for councillors, State government to pay for this training and Councils to pay for extra reviews
- Councillor Code of Conduct sufficient, it includes a clear process
- Timely action and confidentiality are important to the process

Question 10: What can be done to better support dispute resolution at Councils?

- Councillor Code of Conduct to not being used for political purposes
- Increased accessibility to independent external support for dispute resolution and/or meditation
- Panel of providers to assist Councils

Question 11: What types of early intervention mechanisms can be formulated and when? What do you think is an acceptable duration or timeframe for this intervention to fairly resolve a matter?

- Sufficient mechanisms already with Councillor Code of Conduct
- Graduated process at Whitehorse City Council – sufficient, right escalation measures in place
- Needs to be instant intervention when there is a workplace safety issue

Question 12: How can the process for misconduct and/or poor behaviour claims be improved, or more adequate penalties for misconduct and poor behaviour be incorporated in a more effective way?

- Potentially note transparency balanced against confidentiality
- Should a Councillor be suspended before an issue is resolved?
- Not adequate penalties
- Depending on situation – needs to be clear, tougher than current
- External process ie LGI not followed up, LGI seem to be understaffed which impacts responsiveness.