

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

Supporting leadership competencies and capabilities

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)?

- The role of Mayor, Councillors and CEO are already defined within the LG Act but how the role is enacted is open to individual interpretation.
- Provision of additional information and support would help to provide clarity about the councillor role and associated leadership expectations, particularly in regard to:
 - where their role fits into the functioning of the whole of organisation
 - interaction with the organisation, community and other stakeholders
 - setting strategic direction; and
 - understanding how councillors can influence organisational culture (ie oversight of high level metrics)
- The use of non-legislative mechanisms (ie through practice notes) would be helpful, including provision of
 - more specific examples or case studies to explain the expected duties, functions and behaviours of councillors, CEO & administration for different scenarios or situations.
- An overarching framework or guide for all 79 LG areas that enables consistency to be applied to the induction process for councillors outlining minimum need to know information, content on behaviour expectations, values and setting of a positive culture.

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?

- Cultivating an environment of transparency and trust is a challenge for the local government sector given ratepayers generally have difficulty 'trusting' their council.
- Genuine community engagement processes, mentoring and supporting community leaders and enabling community leadership/ownership in solving challenges are all avenues for improving relationships between councils and their community. This also helps to improve community understanding of how local government operates, create pathways into local government and in turn can help to attract candidates from diverse backgrounds with the right values and leadership qualities.
- More access to community leadership programs and support for councils to foster community leadership pathways would be helpful. In the past, candidates who have been engaged with council programs and projects, and had the opportunity to work with staff have had a better understanding of how local government works and what the role of a councillor entails.
- There is no real vetting process for candidates other than the eligibility requirements under the Act. It is left to the voter to conduct their own vetting process which is no different to any other level of government. Some improvements were made to the nomination process prior to the 2020 local government elections but further improvements are required to support

	<p>candidate diversity and minimise stacking of ballot papers with non-genuine representatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhancing the candidate training will also assist to convey the role of a councillor as an advocate for community and that positive working relationships and respect are integral to achieving successful outcomes for the municipality. For those candidates who may have started out as the aggrieved ratepayer it helps them to realise that the role is much broader. ▪ Once elected, there could be consideration for pairing a councillor with a member of the leadership team at the council, or a local government mentor from another municipality. <p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Answered above. ▪ The women’s mentoring program delivered through ALGWA has been very successful in supporting first time councillors.
<p>Operation of local government</p>	<p>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?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The current term of councillors at Campaspe Shire is very much a diverse board of the community. This has been achieved through the councillors deciding to get together early on to agree upon group behavioural expectations, how to engage in respectful debate and to accept that diversity of views and skillset is important. ▪ Councillors also worked with a facilitator (as part of the Council Plan development) to map councillor skills, areas of community interest and share strategic objectives/outcomes for the Shire. This enabled councillors to understand personal drivers, and aggregate into a group vision and the agreed community based objectives set out within the council plan. Completing this earlier on (ie at induction stage) could enable better alignment of councillors at the beginning of the council term. ▪ Leadership from the Mayor and group accountability has also engendered good overall rapport and diverse input whilst also enabling councillors to continue moving towards a common goal. Regular catchups of the councillor group and a commitment from all councillors to participate in these sessions has enabled ongoing dialogue to support individuals and solve challenges together.

Councillor journey – these questions relate to the support and training that could be offered to Councillors	
Training and professional development	<p>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?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The candidate training needs to be significantly improved and well prescribed. ▪ At a minimum a framework should be established for councillor inductions to be more thorough and to have a minimum scope on what should be included so there is consistency across the sector/state acknowledging there may be some nuance required for rural/regional, interface, and metro council settings. ▪ The framework could include modules that consider the following aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gaining a better understanding of obligations, relationship to Act, and interface with community and staff. - baseline roles/responsibilities; - behaviour expectations (integral to culture) of both councillors and council leadership teams to enable establishment of council values, trust and respect. - Councillors completing a “vision for the shire” exercise at induction with administration so that everyone is working for the overall same goals and objectives ▪ Aspects of the training program could also be independently delivered statewide (ie by MAV or VLGA), and should involve both elected councillors and council leadership teams.
	<p>Question 6: How can the local government sector work to formalise a structured professional development pathway for Councillors and Mayors?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is no apparent structured professional development pathway for other levels of government however if this was to be considered it needs to take into account literacy, CALD, disability etc considerations. ▪ A structured professional development pathway would also need to ensure it is not too prescriptive so it enables diversity and flexibility in what professional development councillors choose to gain according to their existing personal/professional backgrounds and circumstances. ▪ Additional budget considerations may need to be factored in by State Govt for any increased professional development requirements. ▪ Current training and support provided by MAV, VLGA, ALGWA are excellent resources and mechanisms for councillors to gain additional skills. Formal and informal mentoring programs where available are also excellent.
Social Media	<p>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?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For our council we believe these mechanisms are already in place as set by the code of conduct and media policies, but acknowledge this can be a difficult conversation for councils where there are opposing views from councillors on what is considered acceptable behaviour on social media. ▪ If other behavioural and cultural aspects are addressed by a broader framework (as per the questions on leadership), harnessing social media for positive and constructive use should naturally follow.

	<p>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?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Our Council does not consider that any amendments to the Act are required to deal with social media use. ▪ This is covered (or should be covered) by other legislation at a commonwealth level and the same principles around social media harassment should apply to all citizens.
<p>Early intervention and effective dispute resolution – these questions relate to how poor behaviour can be dealt with when it arises</p>	
Early intervention	<p>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?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A sector wide proforma or requirement to work on agreed behaviours, values and interaction protocols for the elected representatives, the CEO and management team, (ie at induction stage), may assist to set a framework that fosters positive workplace culture, expectations around governance processes to enable trust and transparency, and mechanisms for parties to call out poor behaviour and misconduct without fear of retribution. <p>Question 10: What can be done to better support dispute resolution at Councils?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consideration could be given to utilise the existing Dispute Settlement Centre of Vic – create an arm for LG which would enable centralised, consistent and independent process.
Dispute resolution	<p>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?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Earliest intervention for any dispute resolution between any parties is the best as this sets the precedent. Cases studies/examples would assist all councillors, CEO and administration to identify these and work through as early as possible. <p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prior learning in the induction process could negate/reduce this.