

Councillor Induction and Professional Development Policy

Reference number: POL 113

Approval date: 21 July 2025

Policy owner: Manager Corporate Governance & Performance

Next review: September 2029

Wagga Wagga City Council is committed to developing an induction and ongoing professional development program for the Mayor and Councillors to ensure they can fulfil their statutory roles and responsibilities. As part of this program, the Mayor and each Councillor will have a Professional Development Plan that identifies specific gaps in their capabilities (i.e. their knowledge, skills and attributes) and identify professional development activities to build these capabilities.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to demonstrate Wagga Wagga City Council's commitment to ensuring that the Mayor and Councillors have access to induction and ongoing professional development which will assist them to develop and maintain the skills and knowledge required to effectively perform their civic role and responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1993 ('the Act').

Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors of Wagga Wagga City Council, including the Mayor.

Responsibilities

The Mayor and all Councillors must make all reasonable endeavours to attend and participate in the induction sessions and professional development activities arranged for them during term of the Council.

The Manager Corporate Governance and Performance is responsible for planning, scheduling and facilitating induction and professional development activities for the Mayor and Councillors in consultation with the General Manager.

The General Manager has overall responsibility for Wagga Wagga City Council's Induction and Professional Development Program.

Budget

An annual budget allocation will be provided to support the induction and professional development activities undertaken by the Mayor and Councillors. Expenditure will be monitored and reported quarterly.

Approval of training and/or expenses

Professional development activities that require council funds are to be approved by the General Manager in accordance with Council's Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy (POL 025).

Review procedures

Council evaluates the ongoing professional development program to determine the program's effectiveness and to identify areas of possible improvement. The outcomes of the professional development program should, at a minimum, include Councillors and Mayors demonstrating core skills and knowledge areas.

Policy Provisions

Induction Program

Council will develop an induction program for new and returning Councillors as well as a supplementary program for the Mayor to ensure they are provided with the information they need to effectively fulfil their roles in the first few months of Council's term and feel confident in their ability to do so. The induction program will cover:

- an orientation to council facilities and the local government area
- an overview of the key issues and tasks for the new council including council's community strategic plan, delivery program, operational plan, resourcing strategy and community engagement plan
- the legislation, rules, principles and political context under which councils operate
- the roles, responsibilities and legal obligations of Councillors and the Mayor
- the financial management responsibilities for Councillors and the Mayor
- Council's organisational structure, workforce management strategy and the roles and responsibilities of the General Manager and council staff
- what Council does and how it operates, including an overview of:
 - integrated planning and reporting
 - land-use planning
 - natural resource management
 - community and cultural services
 - financial management;
 - council businesses
 - economic development
 - infrastructure and
 - asset management by Council
- key Council policies and procedures Councillors must comply with including the code of conduct
- the role of Council meetings and how to participate effectively in them
- the support available to the Mayor and Councillors and where they can go to get more information or assistance
- how to speak to the media appropriately and effectively, and

- information on the process for taking the oath of office and electing the Mayor at the first council meeting

In the case of the Mayor, the program will also cover:

- how to be an effective leader of the governing body and the council
- the role of the Chair and how to chair council meetings
- Councillors role in the integrated planning and reporting process
- the Mayor's role and responsibilities under the code of conduct
- the Mayor's role and responsibilities in relation to the General Manager's employment including the management code of conduct complaints
- the Mayor's role and function at regional and other representative bodies, and
- the Mayor's civic and ceremonial role.

The Mayor and Councillors must have a working knowledge and understanding of these areas by the end of the induction program.

The induction program will also include team building activities to help the governing body establish itself as a cohesive and collaborative team focused on a common purpose with shared values and goals. Activities will aim to ensure the Mayor and Councillors:

- identify how they would like to work together as a team and identify a common vision for the governing body
- build relationships with each other based on trust and mutual respect that facilitate collaboration and using that as a basis to also then develop professional, respectful relationships with staff
- contribute to a positive and ethical culture within the governing body
- encourage and facilitate collaboration with each other
- work towards consensus as members of the governing body for the benefit of the community
- develop respectful negotiation skills and manage alternative views within the governing body without damaging relationships
- champion and communicate the council's vision and strategic plans as a cohesive team
- understand what supports or undermines the effective functioning of the governing body
- respect the diversity of skills and experiences on the governing body, and
- communicate and uphold the decisions of council in a respectful way, even if their own position was not adopted.

Induction and Professional Development activities should also help the mayor, as the leader of the governing body, to:

- act as a stabilising influence and show leadership, and
- promote a culture of integrity and accountability within council and when representing council in the community and elsewhere.

The Mayor and Councillors, including those re-elected to office, must attend all induction sessions.

Council will evaluate the induction program at the end of each council term to determine whether it has achieved these outcomes, and to identify and address areas for improvement.

Ongoing Professional Development Program

An individual ongoing professional development plan will be developed for the Mayor and each Councillor to address any gaps in the capabilities needed to effectively fulfil their role (i.e. the required knowledge, skills and attributes).

Professional development activities will, wherever possible, follow the 70/20/10 principle for delivery. The 70/20/10 principle requires that:

- 70% of learning activities are provided via learning and development from experience – for example, on-the-job training, self-directed learning, developmental roles, problem solving, exposure and practice
- 20% of learning activities are provided via learning and training through social interactions and feedback – for example, personal or professional networks, coaching, mentoring, feedback, memberships and professional associations, and
- 10% of learning activities are provided via learning and development through formal training – for example, structured training courses, external or in-house workshops, seminars, webinars and other e-learning and briefing sessions conducted by the council, external training providers or industry bodies.

The timing of professional development activities for the Mayor and Councillors will be designed in such a way so as to not overload Councillors with learning activities in the early part of council's term. The timing will reflect what knowledge and skills Councillors and the Mayor need at various points in council's term to undertake their roles.

A variety of delivery methods will be implemented to ensure flexibility and effectiveness in conveying the information. The Mayor and Councillors will be provided with as much notice as possible for induction and professional development activities.

Each professional development plan will span the council's term, and identify professional development activities that the Mayor or Councillors will participate in. The Mayor and Councillors are expected to complete all the activities included in their professional development plan.

To assist in this process, professional development activities will be categorised into the following areas and will be prioritised according to need and approved by the General Manager where council funds are required in accordance with council's Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy (POL 025).

Imperative Training

Training that is considered imperative is vital to the role of a Councillor and must be attended by all Councillors at least once per term. This training includes areas specific to the legislative and governance roles and functions of a Councillor, such as:

- Councillor Induction Program
- Meeting procedures
- Code of Conduct
- Conflicts of Interest
- The relationship between councillors and staff

Desirable Training

Training that is considered desirable is that which is important to the role of the Councillor and is in the best interest of the Councillor to attend, such as:

- Financial skills
- Planning legislation
- Strategic management
- Community leadership

Developmental Training

Developmental training is offered to Councillors for the further development of skills or professional expertise. Such training may include:

- Attendance at conferences, seminars and workshops
- Informal sessions conducted by council with appropriate guest speakers or trainers
- Discussion papers, reference and research materials
- On-line training including webinars
- Mentoring

Legislative Context

Councillors are bound by the Local Government Act 1993 and Local Government Regulations 2021. Under section 232(1)(g) of the Act, all Mayors and Councillors have a responsibility to make all reasonable efforts to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform their roles.

To support this, the General Manager is required under the Regulation to ensure the delivery of:

- an induction program for newly elected and returning councillors and a specialised supplementary induction program for the mayor within six months of their election,
- an ongoing Professional Development Program for the Mayor and each Councillor over the term of the council to assist them to acquire and maintain the skills necessary to perform their roles. The content of the ongoing professional development program is to be determined in consultation with the Mayor and each Councillor. It must be needs-based and reflect the specific skills, knowledge and personal attributes required by the mayor, each individual councillor and the governing body as a whole, to perform their roles effectively.

Councils are also required to report on the participation of the Mayor and Councillors in these programs in the Annual Report.

Reporting Requirements

The General Manager of Wagga Wagga City Council will publicly report each year in Council's Annual Report:

- the name of the Mayor and each individual Councillor that completed Council's Induction Program (where an induction program has been delivered during the relevant year)
- the name of the Mayor and each Councillor who participated in any ongoing Professional Development Program during the year

- the number of training and other activities provided to the Mayor and Councillors during the year as part of Professional Development Program
- the total cost of induction and professional development activities and any other training provided to the Mayor and Councillors during the relevant year.

Evaluation

Council will evaluate the professional development program at the end of each council term to assess whether it was effective in assisting the mayor and councillors to develop the capabilities required to fulfil their civic roles.

Related Documents

- Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy (POL 025)
- Code of Conduct
- Councillor Handbook, Office of Local Government

Revision History

Revision number	Council resolution	Council meeting date
1	Res No: 08/076.7	31 March 2008
2	Res No: 09/007	27 January 2009
3	Res No: 09/077	27 July 2009
4	Res No: 13/187	29 July 2013
5	Res No: 13/224.1	26 August 2013
6	General Manager approval	August 2016
7	Res No: 17/279	28 August 2017
8	Res No: 20/290	10 August 2020
9	General Manager approval under delegated authority	July 2021
10	Res No. 22/354	17 October 2022
11	Revision approved under General Manager delegated authority	24 June 2025
12	Res No: 25/215	21 July 2025