WORKFORCE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

CAPACITY BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

ACELG Australian Centre of Excellence for **Local Government**

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LEARNING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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Australian Centre of Excellence for Local
Government

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About the Learning in Local Government Project

The 'Learning in Local Government' project explores the often unique and complex needs of education and professional development in Australian local government. It aims to inform and facilitate the development of education and training programs through the Australian Centre for Excellence in Local Government (ACELG). ACELG has committed funds to the project through its Workforce Development Program with a view to coordinating, commissioning or (in rare instances) delivering training programs to address priority needs.

Work and discussions continue to explore gaps in the content and availability of education and professional development specifically tailored to local government's needs. ACELG is advocating an integrated national approach that:

- is forward looking and reflects the changing environment and role of local government;
- addresses sector needs for essential skills now and into the future;
- focuses equally on people working in the sector and meets their personal needs to enhance their skills and develop their careers; and
- offers seamless pathways between vocational and higher education and ongoing professional development.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgment is also given to the many colleagues at the Local Government Associations, LGMAs, state government agencies responsible for local government, Workforce Planning Australia and Workforce BluePrint who support workforce planning and development in the sector. Their willingness to share their expertise and experience were invaluable to shaping the outcomes of this paper, any shortcomings in the analysis or errors are solely the fault of the author.

Acronyms

ACELG	Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government
ALGA	Australian Local Government Association
ALGWA	Australian Local Government Women's Association
DLG	Department of Local Government
GSA	Government Skills Australia
LGA	Local Government Association
LGANT	Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
LGAT	Local Government Association of Tasmania
LGAQ	Local Government Association of Queensland
LGMA	Local Government Managers Australia
LGPMC	Local Government and Planning Ministers Council
LGSA	Local Government and Shires Association (NSW)
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
WALGA	Western Australia Local Government Association

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1.   Introduction

Demographic, technological and global changes present enormous challenges and brilliant opportunities. The population continues to age. Technological developments are occurring faster than we dreamed, dramatically altering the way that we work. Competitive pressures on all sectors of the economy are increasing. Manufactured goods, and increasingly services, are traded across the world. Developed nations are relying more and more on their capacity to innovate and drive economic growth. The ability to do this depends upon the skills and knowledge of their people.

-   *Lord Leitch (2005)*

Local governments in Australia play an essential role in communities, providing a wide range of services, developing and maintaining infrastructure, in addition to responsibilities for good governance, advocacy, planning, community development and regulation. There are about 560 largely autonomous local government bodies accountable to diverse metropolitan, regional, rural, remote and Indigenous communities (ACELG 2012a), and the sector employs approximately 195,500 people (ACELG 2012b).

Attracting, recruiting and retaining this large workforce are becoming increasingly difficult. The labour market in Australia is tight, characterised by an ageing workforce, technological change and skills shortages. Populations in some inland rural and remote areas are declining and in other areas competition for staff from the resources sector is intense. For local governments, therefore, an ability to plan for and develop their workforce in this complex environment is fundamental to ensuring that they continue to be able to serve their communities.

This report forms part of a series of papers reviewing the unique and complex needs of education and professional development in Australian Local Government. The Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government's (ACELG's) *Learning in Local Government* project explores gaps and opportunities in the delivery of education and professional development programs to facilitate an integrated national approach.

The report presents the results of an initial review of the need for training in workforce development and planning. It does not provide a detailed analysis of the local government workforce, which has been done elsewhere (for example in the forthcoming National Local Government Workforce Strategy, ACELG 2012c, in the LGAQ's Industry Skills and Workforce Development Report 2011, and in various state profiles of local government employment). Rather it provides a brief overview of the main issues and then focuses on identifying existing training and capacity building initiatives for councils. Other papers in this series on skills shortages and on eLearning are also relevant to this discussion on workforce planning and development, and provide further detail and analysis of some of the issues involved.

1.1   Methodology

Selected councils, local government associations, professional institutes, training providers and government agencies responsible for local government in each state and in the Northern Territory were contacted and interviewed about their programs and activities to strengthen workforce development and planning. Their views on the main challenges councils face in this field were also discussed. In addition a literature review identified research and resources available on this subject. Finally, an internet search identified key training providers and experts in the sector which could be drawn upon at state or national level to inform the development of resources.

1.2 Who's who?

There are a range of actors involved in strengthening workforce planning and development in local government. This section provides a brief overview of the main organisations concerned.

ACELG, LGMA and the Local Government Practice Unit

The Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) is a consortium established in 2009 to enhance professionalism and skills in local government, showcase innovation and best practice, and facilitate a better-informed policy debate.

The Local Government Managers Australia national office (LGMA National) is a member of the ACELG consortium and the professional association representing management professionals in local government. In addition to LGMA National, each state also has its own LGMA. To varying degrees these associations provide training and professional development for their members. In some cases this extends to providing training and support on workforce development and planning.

In April 2006, LGMA National facilitated a Skills Shortage Forum in Canberra to explore and define skills shortage issues in local government. An outcome of the forum was the formation of a National Skills Shortage Steering Committee, and the development of the National Skills Shortage Strategy for Local Government in 2007. Follow-up workforce development forums have been held annually since 2006.

In 2009 ACELG and the LGMA jointly established the Local Government Practice Unit to facilitate workforce planning and development. As a result the National Skills Shortage Steering Committee became ACELG's Workforce Development Reference Group, which advises and guides the work of the Practice Unit. The Group draws on the knowledge, interests, skills and expertise of a number of peak local government bodies and other organisations aligned with the sector.

Government Skills Australia

Government Skills Australia (GSA) is a member of the Workforce Development Reference Group. It is the national Industry Skills Council for the government sector: local government is one of five 'industries' covered by GSA. Skills Councils focus on Vocational Education and Training (VET) needs, rather than higher (university-level) education.

GSA provides industry intelligence to the federal government on needs to enhance skills and develop training programs. It services industry through the provision of quality training products and qualifications, and advice on workforce development. In terms of local government, GSA is responsible for setting out the competencies and training packages required for the range of VET qualifications available to council employees. However, because local government undertakes a very broad range of functions and therefore requires a workforce with diverse skills, GSA shares this responsibility with several other Skills Councils.

GSA's 2011 Environmental Scan provides a clear strategic understanding of existing and emerging skills shortages, and hence the need to update training packages. The scan reviews factors currently impacting on workforce development within the government and community safety sectors, and considers the responsiveness of training packages and the broader system.

Local Government Associations

Each state and the Northern Territory has its own Local Government Association (LGA) representing councils in their jurisdiction. LGAs provide training, support and advice to councils, and facilitate discussion and networking forums on a range of topics. They are thus well placed to play a key role in providing training and support on workforce development and planning. Nationally, the LGAs are

represented by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), but it has only limited involvement in workforce issues.

Local Government Ministerial Forum
In 2008, the then Local Government and Planning Ministers Council (LGPMC) and the Prime Minister identified the need for a local government workforce strategy to address skills shortages and enhance the professionalism of local government. In May 2009 it was agreed that local government officials would develop a draft local government workforce strategy, in consultation with stakeholders, to examine the skills shortage in the context of workforce planning, career development and retention. In addition, Queensland agreed to prepare a paper for LGPMC (with input from WA and NT) on strategies to increase the number of indigenous employees in local government. The development of the Strategy was linked to a range of Council of Australian Governments (COAG) commitments regarding the Australian workforce and the upgrading of workforce skills as part of a drive to improve productivity (ACELG 2012c forthcoming).

The LGPMC was dissolved in 2010 and has been only partially replaced by a Local Government Ministerial Forum that meets as required. ACELG has been commissioned to complete the workforce strategy on behalf of jurisdictions, and a final report is expected in mid 2012. It is not yet clear how the strategy will be taken forward by federal, state and Northern Territory governments, or indeed by local government itself.

2.   What needs to be considered in workforce development

The informal survey of different training courses and resources available to councils undertaken for this report identified several key elements which form part of any programme on workforce planning and development. What follows is an overview to inform the subsequent discussion of what is happening at state and territory level, and the analysis of key challenges and next steps.

This section draws heavily from the resources available in the NSW Division of Local Government's website on workforce planning. It outlines some of the key and common elements found during the survey. It should be emphasised that for workforce planning and development to be effective it must reflect and respond to the context in which local governments work. Every element will not be equally relevant for all councils.

2.1   Horizon scanning
One of the first steps taken in a workforce planning process, horizon scanning enables managers to identify future challenges and opportunities which will affect the recruitment and retention of staff. Anticipating demographic, regulatory, social or environmental change also helps councils to prepare for and perhaps even pre-empt these challenges. Some current issues that councils will probably need to explore are as follows.

An ageing workforce
Like all governments, local councils face considerable challenges in meeting the needs of an ageing population. At the same time, they need to deal with the implications of an ageing workforce and a declining proportion of working age people in the total population. For example, in Queensland 49% of the local government workforce is over 45 years of age (LGAQ 2011). In NSW the 2010 Census of Local Government Employees shows that the bulk of the workforce falls into the 35-44 and 45-54 categories (DLG 2011). Around 20% of the workforce could be expected to retire in this decade.

Table 1: Local Government Employees by Age, NSW

Age	Number of employees	Percentage of workforce
15-24	4,897	10%
25-34	8,566	17%
35-44	11,553	24%
45-54	13,654	28%
55-64	8,581	18%
65+	1,127	2%

Source: Adapted from Table 7 in DLG 2011

It might be expected that people will be more likely to stay in the workforce for longer periods partly for financial reasons and also because they are remaining active and healthy well into their sixties and beyond. However, despite extended life expectancy the average retirement age has declined in recent decades. The average age of people who retired in the last five years was 62.5 (ABS 2011). In local government, some staff with long service records who are part of a defined benefit superannuation scheme are eligible to retire at 55. The Commonwealth's 2010 Intergenerational Report explains that Australia's mature age participation rate is below that of comparable countries. As a result there is scope to increase employment of mature age workers, especially through policies that target improvements in education, health and attachment to the labour market. This includes removing barriers to workforce participation for mature aged people (Commonwealth of Australia 2010).

Thus in addition to planning appropriate services for an older population, councils must consider how to deal with the ageing of their own workforce. Do they have a projected staff age profile? Do they know when staff are planning to retire, especially those in critical roles? Are there programs in place to meet the needs of older staff e.g. transition to retirement, part time or flexible work arrangements? What can councils do to facilitate skills and knowledge transfer between older employees nearing retirement and younger staff?

Retaining older staff can be an effective strategy as some Australian and overseas studies have found that the net benefits of employing older workers exceed those of their replacement by younger ones. The lower job turnover rate of older workers, their higher loyalty and corporate memory compensate for their higher wages (Freyens 2011). This has to be balanced against possible disadvantages such as the potential for increased health problems and weaker technological skills. Each case must be decided on its own merits but the value of retaining older staff should be assessed against more than higher wages alone. The Queensland Government's website on Industrial Relations provides some useful strategies and guidelines for mature age employment.[1]

Succession planning and identifying critical roles
Closely linked to the issue of Australia's ageing workforce is that of business succession planning, i.e. the consideration of current and future organisational capability and staffing needs, and strategies to ensure that these can be met.

Generally the local government workforce is older than the Australian labour force as a whole. In 2011, the median age for local government administration was 44, compared with 39 for all industries (Neville 2012). Councils therefore need to think about how to attract younger workers. Youth employment encompasses university graduates, traineeships/apprenticeships, casual employment, work experience and vacation work placement programs. Youth are under-

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[1] www.justice.qld.gov.au/fair-and-safe-work/industrial-relations/mature-aged-employment

represented in local government for many reasons. Contributing factors include: lack of awareness of the variety of careers available;[2] the problematic image of councils; and the perception of a very conservative working environment (Constable 2003). In addition remuneration rates may be lower than for other industries.

The NSW DLG website[3] explains that business succession planning focuses on identified critical roles, specifically the skills that make that role critical, and seeks to ensure there is current and future capacity for these to be filled with appropriately skilled existing staff. This includes reviewing processes to determine if there are more effective ways to deliver services and then training staff accordingly.

The changing nature of the workforce means that employees will have to update and acquire new skills during their working life more frequently than workers from previous generations. This continual updating of skills is essential for both employees to remain in the workforce and for the organisation, which requires relevant, up-to-date and appropriately skilled employees (Constable 2003). New technologies and the growth of eLearning can be useful tools enabling local government to address this challenge, especially for councils in rural and remote areas where access to training can be a particular problem. There is some evidence to show that local government has invested very little in training. For example, a study from NSW indicated that the average council budget allocation to training was just over 1% (Red Letter Information 2005). More research needs to be done to ascertain how much councils are investing in training and development of employees.

Climate change
Adapting to climate change and cutting carbon emissions can be a planning and resourcing challenge for councils, both operationally in terms of running offices and facilities and in terms of working with the community to raise awareness and provide information and access to resources.

Councils need to think about how to meet changing obligations and take advantage of opportunities that arise. For example, the new Commonwealth Clean Energy Act 2011 requires organisations that operate waste disposal facilities to calculate and report their carbon emissions. Councils will need to assess skills available in their workforce and plan appropriately to meet new emissions reporting requirements. At the same time, they will need skills to exploit new funding programs and opportunities to raise revenue from initiatives such as carbon farming.

Population and economic growth
The ABS estimates[4] that in June 2011 Australia's resident population was 22.62 million, with an annual growth rate of 1.4%. During 2010-2011 all states and territories experienced population growth with the largest increase in Western Australia. Population growth was most prominent in inner-city areas and outer suburbs: more than 14.3 million people, close to two-thirds of Australia's inhabitants, reside in the major metropolitan centres.[5] Growth was also strong in 'seachange' coastal areas, other major regional centres, and mining districts. Conversely, much of inland rural and remote Australia is experiencing a decline in population.

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[2] There are over 400 different occupations in Local Government ranging from clerks, administrators and managers, to labourers, engineers, child care workers, plumbers, builders and nurses just to name a few (ACELG 2012c, forthcoming).
[3] www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/dlg_IntegratedPlanningIndex.asp?sectionid=1&mi=20&ml=10&AreaIndex=WFPLAN&index=1004 accessed 9.3.12
[4] www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3101.0Main%20Features3Jun%202011?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno =3101.0&issue=Jun%202011&num=&view= accessed 27.2.12
[5] http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/3218.0~2009-10~Main+Features~Main+Features?OpenDocument accessed 27.2.12

These changes in population settlement patterns, increases in urban and peri-urban areas and declines in some inland rural and remote regions, pose particular challenges to local government. Councils need to understand the predictions for their areas in order to be able to provide the required services, whether they be additional services and infrastructure for a growing population, new types of services required for a changing demographic, or programs to address economic decline. All these changes have major implications for workforce planning and development.

Staff recruitment and retention in some inland rural and remote areas can be particularly difficult where populations are decreasing and/or there is considerable competition from the mining sector for human resources. What strategies do councils have in place to maximise their workforce and to attract employees from non traditional pools? Are there opportunities for collaboration with neighbouring councils, with other government agencies, or with local businesses to share resources? What can councils do to attract employees in areas where the resources sector offers competitive salaries?

Technological change

Communications and information technology is changing quickly and is reshaping the way we interact, communicate and access services both at work and at home. Councils tend to be conservative in their responses to new technologies; the explosion of social media is a case in point. Whilst their communities quickly adopt these new communications tools, historically councils have struggled to understand their potential value. Increasingly, however, they are beginning to use social media to provide services, to communicate, consult and engage with residents and to recruit staff. The adoption of this type of technology can provide a new source of ideas but can also pose some disadvantages in terms of the volume of information generated. Their use and integration into how local government does business needs to be thought through. Who among the staff are the early adopters of new technologies? Can their interest and enthusiasm be harnessed? Does council have the necessary IT, communication and service delivery skills and experience to incorporate social media and new information technologies into the way it conducts business? Does council have a social media strategy?

Social media is just one example of changing technologies. Improvements in IT, the national broadband network, and other advances will change the way we work, facilitating more flexible arrangements, outsourcing and off-shoring tasks, enabling collaboration across large geographical spaces, and facilitating state-wide and national communities of practice. In addition, eLearning can be an important resource for councils (see www.iken.net.au/e-learning for the findings of ACELG's work in this area).

Early adoption of new technologies can help councils to meet a range of challenges including those posed by climate change. Switching to more energy efficient vehicle fleets and sustainable ways of generating energy can help councils to save money and meet emissions reduction targets. Better ways of processing waste can also help reduce pressure on landfills and emissions. Do councils have the skills and expertise to understand, select and implement the technologies available to meet these challenges?

While not new technology, councils' access to and use of human resource information systems also needs to be considered. Do they have the right kind of systems and skills to understand their workforce and to be able to analyse and interrogate data?

2.2 Attraction, recruitment and retention

Strategies for attracting, selecting and keeping employees are key elements of a workforce plan. Local councils need to analyse their context and develop approaches that will best suit their needs.

In general however, councils operate within the context of a tight labour market due to salary competition and a shortage of skilled candidates. This means that some positions are particularly difficult to fill, notably engineers, planners, child care staff, environmental health workers, surveyors and managers. Key issues that councils need to consider when forumulating their workforce plans and strategies are set out below.

Attraction and recruitment

Recruiting staff to skills shortage areas is recognised as a particular challenge. The LGAQ reports that chronic skill shortages continue to create problems for councils across Queensland. In 2007 all councils faced shortages, although this eased in 2009 in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis as councils came to be viewed as a stable and safe employment option. In 2011 the situation changed again – moving back towards 2007 trends. In August 2011, 90% of councils in Queensland faced a skill shortage compared to 75% in October 2010 (LGAQ 2011). Part of ACELG's *Learning in Local Government* project looks at the difficulties for training and attracting staff to local government in the skills areas of building surveying, town planning, environmental health and engineering. Further detail can be found in an accompanying report in this series.

Councils need to promote themselves as an employer of choice. Although the results from the interviews carried out for this paper constitute a small sample, the general view is that potential candidates have a poor perception of or misunderstand local government. Improved awareness of the role of local government can be achieved through outreach programs targeted at students, residents and businesses. Promoting flexible and family-friendly work practices as well as other initiatives such as scholarship programs, graduate development programs, apprenticeships and traineeships would also help to position local government as an employer of choice. Many councils are unaware that their work-life balance policies are a real strength and can be marketed during recruitment as a benefit of working in local government that other industries cannot match (Wendy Perry personal communication 2012).

Collaborations with local schools, colleges and universities can also be an avenue for recruiting future staff. Efforts to raise students' awareness about the career, employment opportunities and benefits of working in councils can help boost the number of quality applications received during a recruitment process. This can be as simple as disseminating information or providing internship programs enabling students to spend time working at a council.

Partnerships amongst groups of councils may also assist with recruiting skilled staff, by maximising promotional efforts, by supporting group traineeships, by enabling councils to share senior professionals, or by improving career opportunities.

Another creative approach may be targeting non-traditional labour pools. These include, amongst others, women, indigenous people, carers, single parents and migrants. Councils can develop strategies to encourage these groups to apply for positions and thus widen the applicant pool from which they are able to recruit. In addition, regional skilled migration programs can be developed in conjunction with local Chambers of Commerce to target specific local skills shortages. The LGMA 2007 National Skills Strategy includes skilled migration initiatives in its strategies for addressing skills shortages.

In this vein, WALGA's Local Government Workplace Solutions has assisted a number of member councils with the recruitment of skilled professionals from overseas. Many of WALGA's members have expressed difficulties in recruitment stemming from the lack of skilled professionals in both urban and regional Western Australia. To address this Local Government Workplace Solutions has been successfully administering the process of 457 Temporary Business (Long Stay) visas over the

last few years as part of its recruitment service. Over 70 visa placements have been made throughout the state and the demand still exists from councils to learn more (WALGA no date). Through the 457 program councils can employ overseas professionals who may:

- work in Australia for a period of up to 4 years
- bring any eligible secondary applicants with them to Australia – secondary applicants can work and study
- after entering Australia, have no limit on the number of times they travel in and out of Australia.

Councils may also need to be innovative in how they carry out their recruitment. Social media is growing in importance as a way of keeping in touch with potential candidates, letting them know of vacancies and of the benefits of working for local government.

Gender and diversity issues continue to pose challenges for councils. In order for local government to serve its communities best, staff ethnic and gender profiles should reflect those of its residents. In 2008 across Australia, women still accounted for less than 30% of councillors, only 20% of senior managers and only 5% of chief executives in local government. The Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) launched its 50:50 Vision - Councils for Gender Equity Program in 2010 to address this imbalance. Councils can participate in the program and gain recognition for the work that they are doing to promote gender equity within their organisations.[6]

Penrith City Council provides an example of what can be achieved. Until recently, as is common to most councils, outdoor staff at Penrith were all men. In 2003, managers looked closely at how to address this imbalance and what was blocking women from applying for outdoor positions. In the end they removed the requirement of previous experience for entry level outdoor positions. Now interested applicants fill out an application and complete an aptitude test. Based on the outcome of the aptitude test they are selected for interview. The aptitude test levels the playing field and opens the door to female applicants and younger male applicants who have not previously worked in outdoor positions. Today there are 24 female outdoor staff. This demonstrates the importance of examining and considering the recruitment process and thinking about who is excluded as a result of selection criteria and whether these criteria are really necessary for a candidate to be able to carry out the job successfully.

Retention
Developing and up-skilling existing employees can be more efficient and cost-effective than attracting highly qualified external candidates who may be less likely to stay with the organisation or in the area. Individual staff development programs built into council's performance management system can improve staff retention and fill skills gaps. But this needs to be thought out and planned.

In addition to staff development, councils can tailor employee working practices to fit in better with personal and community responsibilities. This could include the option of family friendly working hours (flexible hours, working from home etc.), providing leave to fulfil community responsibilities (e.g. volunteering etc.). With an ageing workforce there is likely to be a greater requirement for more flexible work arrangements. Many older workers will have caring responsibilities (elderly parents, partners, grandchildren), other family commitments and/or their own health concerns to balance with the need to continue earning an income (Constable 2003). This need applies equally to younger employees with children and/or elderly relatives to care for.

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[6] www.5050vision.com.au/

For smaller councils, a perceived and a real lack of career pathways can be a particular problem which requires innovative solutions. As noted earlier, partnerships with other councils may be used to enhance career progression, enabling staff to continue to grow and develop their skills where opportunities in just one council are limited. Secondments with government agencies could be used in a similar way.

Little is known about how much local government invests in the training and development of its staff, a critical employee retention strategy. More research and data analysis should be undertaken to understand how professional development is funded and to what level, examining linkages to recruitment and retention of staff.

3.   Components of a workforce strategy

There are many resources and materials to guide the development of workforce strategies. This section presents the NSW Division of Local Government's strategic framework[7] to ensure that workforce plans achieve their objectives. The key features of this framework apply readily to other jurisdictions.

3.1   Analysis of workforce requirements
In NSW, the analysis of workforce requirements needs to be directly aligned with the objectives expressed in the 10 year community strategic plan and 4 year delivery program. This ensures that councils have the human resources required to meet those objectives. A comprehensive analysis of workforce requirements should take into consideration the major issues facing councils including current and future skills shortages, business succession planning, meeting EEO legislative requirements, retaining staff and attracting quality recruitment candidates. Staff censuses can provide baseline information about the characteristics of local government employees enabling managers to develop initiatives to increase their staff diversity.

3.2   Work structure
The NSW Local Government Act 1993 requires councils to adopt an organisation structure which is appropriate to the needs of each council area and to identify senior staff positions within that structure. Council's workforce structure needs to be appropriately configured so that operations can meet the long-term goals and objectives of the community strategic plan and delivery program – the right people in the right places with the right skills doing the right jobs. Involving the staff in the development of the elements of the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework will help to ensure that there is good communication and co-operation between a council's various administrative and business units.

3.3   Workplace equity and diversity
There are many important benefits to councils of applying Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO); implementing the principles of multiculturalism; and incorporating the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights across all levels of workforce planning. These include:

- maximising the potential recruitment pool available to council
- council's workforce better reflecting and communicating with the local community it serves
- better understanding the issues affecting the local community
- making council's programs accessible to the diverse range of local people
- better achieving the community's aims as expressed in the community strategic plan.

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[7] www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/dlg_IntegratedPlanningIndex.asp?sectionid=0&mi=20&ml=10&AreaIndex=WFPLAN&index=1004 accessed 29.2.12

3.4 Employee support and development

A council's strategic objectives can only be achieved by supporting, developing and retaining staff. Benefits include having a skilled, committed workforce with low turnover rates, retention of corporate knowledge and a healthy organisational culture. Elements should include:

Managing and recognising performance is the framework and mechanism that aligns individual, business unit and council objectives. It is important to identify and implement assessment methods for determining whether objectives are being achieved.

Learning and development is the process of identifying development needs at business unit and individual levels, and providing programs to develop skills and knowledge to deliver the community's objectives. This includes mentoring programs, leadership development, apprenticeships and traineeships. In addition, managers need to be more engaged in training and development of staff.

Business succession planning establishes a merit-based process that recruits a flow of employees, develops their skills and abilities, and prepares them for advancement, all while retaining them to ensure a return on the organisation's training investment. Business succession planning can protect against the loss of corporate knowledge in the current climate of an ageing workforce nearing large-scale retirement. It is separate from individual career planning, which is linked to learning and development.

Having a *workforce culture* that embraces work/life balance and engages with employees in policy development and decision-making will assist in developing a healthy organisation that performs well through staff loyalty. This may include flexible working arrangements to enable staff to meet family or community responsibilities. It will also minimise recruitment costs through lowering staff turnover rates.

The *development of professional/collegial networks* can assist council with skills sharing and peer support and can include Regional Organisations of Councils, Strategic Alliances or special interest groups such as the Local Government Aboriginal Network, and the LGMA's various special interest groups. The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia (IPWEA) website also hosts an Ask Your Mates Forum which is a general forum enabling engineers working in council to ask advice and help from other engineers.[8]

Where *rewards or recognition* are offered to council employees as incentives, it is important that a clear and transparent policy and process be developed with selection criteria which ensure integrity and fairness. The issue of whether council staff feel valued or not extends to more than just remuneration.

Again, this information is drawn from the NSW DLG's website on workforce planning and development which provides a wide range of information and support for councils.

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[8] www.ipwea.org.au/IPWEA/Communities/CommunityDetails/?CommunityKey=40161684-473f-4db3-9dbc-ff10c03497e2

4.   Developments in Workforce Planning

This section outlines some key activities happening across Australia to support councils to plan and develop their workforce. It summarises the content of interviews and literature reviews on workforce planning and development undertaken for this study in each state and territory.

4.1   New South Wales

NSW and WA are the only states where there is a legislative requirement for councils to undertake workforce planning. In 2009 the NSW Government amended the 1993 Local Government Act to introduce the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework. IP&R is composed of a suite of integrated processes and documents to streamline local government planning and reporting. This includes a 10-year community strategic plan, a resourcing strategy (which includes a workforce management plan, amongst others), a 4-year delivery program, an annual operational plan and an annual report. The NSW Division of Local Government has provided a great deal of information and guidelines for IP&R including a section of their website[9] dedicated to workforce planning.

In addition to its work to support workforce planning and development the NSW DLG is also carrying out a program to promote diversity in local government. In 2011 it released a report on findings from the 2010 Census of Local Government Employees.[10] This census provides some of the information councils need to carry out workforce planning but it covers only part of the picture. One common issue coming out of the interviews conducted for this report is a general need to strengthen councils' ability to identify, collect, understand and analyse their own relevant workforce planning data.

Workforce management plans are also required to contain EEO and diversity strategies. As a result the Division is working to strengthen councils' understanding of these issues and their capacity to integrate them into the way they do business.

In addition to support provided by the State Division of Local Government, LGMA and LGSA carry out training and support for workforce planning and development through the provision of courses and information and networking platforms for human resource and management professionals. LGMA NSW facilitates a Human Resources network to promote exchange and learning on issues of common interest.

4.2   Northern Territory

LGANT is in the final stages of implementing its Indigenous Work Force Development Plan. One outcome of this plan is the purchase of the licence to access Workforce Planning Australia's supply gap analysis tool. This tool enables evidence based workforce planning. It will allow councils to project workforce supply gaps according to different timeframes and against a range of scenarios. This means that management teams will have access to critical workforce data in order to enable planning and development. Councils will be able to purchase annual user licenses for the tool for a fee. If enough councils use it consistently over the next few years, LGANT will be able to build a territory wide picture of supply gaps. LGANT also hosts a Human Resources forum enabling HR Managers and senior officers to meet every three to four months to discuss common problems and share experiences.

Similar to other states, there are wide variations in capacity to carry out workforce planning and development in the Northern Territory. For example, according to LGANT, Roper Golf Shire is

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[9] www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/dlg_IntegratedPlanningIndex.asp?sectionid=1&mi=20&ml=10&AreaIndex=WFPlan&index=1001

[10] www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/documents/Information/2010%20Census%20of%20Local%20Government%20Employees%20-%20Report%20on%20Findings.pdf

embracing workforce development as a strategic planning tool. Darwin City Council is also well placed in terms of having the capacity and resources to invest in workforce planning. In contrast other councils' ability to carry out workforce planning is comparatively weak as a result of high staff turnover and insufficient resources. It should be kept in mind that the current configuration of councils in the NT has only been in place since 2008 and as a result some are still finding their feet.

Anecdotal evidence from the interviews carried out with councils, LGANT and the NT department indicates that the labour market in the NT is very mobile. Consequently, a challenge that councils share, which is perhaps most severe in the Territory, is very a high turnover of staff. Partly as a result, the focus in the Northern Territory is very much on supporting indigenous employment in local government. To this end some councils have established a mentoring scheme whereby all staff meet with managers annually and indigenous staff meet with them twice a year to discuss workplace issues. Initial results show that this approach is helping to strengthen communication between management and indigenous staff reducing staff turnover.

4.3   Queensland

As for other states and Territories in Australia Queensland faces many challenges in workforce planning and development. Discussions with LGAQ indicate that one may be a lack of understanding and appreciation, especially at senior management level but also throughout council, of the benefits of workforce planning. The professional background and experience of CEOs may not include human resource management expertise. As such they may not be aware of the importance of workforce planning, what it entails and what practical benefits might ensue for councils. In addition there is little shared understanding of what workforce planning means, its objectives and how it can contribute to strategic and corporate planning.

In order to address this challenge the LGAQ has received funding to run a pilot program to train and support 28 councils over the next two years to develop and implement their workforce plans. The underlying logic is that by enabling a representative group of councils to carry out workforce planning, its benefits will become evident to the sector as a whole through their experience and the outcomes achieved. Thus over the next two years, in collaboration with participating councils, the LGAQ aims to develop a comprehensive and coordinated workforce planning regime that all councils in Queensland can adopt. The importance of a coordinated approach must be emphasised because the ability to compare, collate and aggregate data among councils, regions, the state and nationally is a key factor in successful workforce planning. If each council uses a different model and collects different data then the ability to analyse the workforce for the sector as a whole is undermined.

Follow up and accompaniment are a key strategy for this program. Experience from the LGAQ Metrics program showed that while councils are 100% committed to a program at the inception phase, often this can falter as the project progresses and staff return to their day-to-day work and competing priorities. As a result the LGAQ will provide a dedicated person to guide councils through the workforce planning processes and help them to stay on track (Tony Goode, personal communication).

4.4   South Australia

The Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA SA) has carried out a great deal of work to strengthen the capacity of its councils to carry out workforce planning. The Association has documented this experience and this section draws from its paper on the *South Australian Local Government Workforce Planning Project* (Semmens *et al.* 2011). While a summary is provided here of the work that has taken place further detail can be found in that paper.

There are 68 councils (in both regional and metropolitan areas) in SA which are supported by 9,000 employees and 740 elected members. The LGA SA undertook two workforce planning projects in 2001 and 2005 to develop sector wide workforce profiles. The profiles were accessible to all SA councils to enable them to compare their own workforce data with that of the sector as a whole. The profiles provided councils with an understanding of contemporary workforce issues at the macro level and could be used as the basis for the development of individual workforce plans and development strategies.

Following these profiles work was undertaken for the *Improving SA Councils' Asset and Financial Management Practices Program* which included a *Managing for the Future – Performance Improvement Program.* This was rolled-out progressively across councils. It involved a comprehensive assessment of each council's progress in the areas of Strategy & Planning, Annual Planning and Budgeting, Governance and Management, and Capacity and Resilience to establish a baseline position for reform work undertaken to date, and preparation of a continuous improvement plan to guide further reform work. Workforce planning was included as part of Capacity and Resilience category.

The workforce planning assessment asked questions around the existence of workforce/human resource plans that link to Strategic Management Plans; articulated standards of service; employee skills information identified by work group; and employee qualifications information also identified by work group. It also requested assurances that the council regularly monitor and review staffing levels and staffing capabilities; took action to identify skills gaps; and review and update its workforce/human resources plan annually.

In terms of workforce planning, the LGA invited councils to nominate either as a pilot council or as participants in a Workforce Planning Reference Group. There was a high level of interest and a representative group of small, medium and large country and metropolitan councils was chosen to undertake the pilots. Pilot councils received assistance and support to prepare comprehensive workforce plans and workforce development strategies covering skills gaps, staff retention, succession planning, recruitment, training, mentoring, resource sharing and collaborative initiatives and practices.

A Workforce Planning Reference Group was also set up with 21 members - 15 of whom were from non-pilot councils who were keen to be involved. This kept all the interested councils involved in project discussions and decisions. Four face to face meetings were held. These assisted pilot councils to network and keep on track.

This model of providing training, mentoring and a platform for networking, peer support and learning has so far proven to be well received by participating councils and the LGA SA will roll this out to more councils as funding permits. It does require funding and commitment in terms of resources, but over time as workforce planning becomes embedded into council operations these costs should reduce.

4.5   Tasmania

The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) has developed tools to assist councils in collecting and analysing data from their workforce to identify issues and address them. These tools are freely available for councils to use and the Association also offers training and support for councils on a fee basis. LGAT is also nearing the end of phase one of a project to collect data from councils in order to gather information on every local government employee in Tasmania.

4.6   Victoria

The training landscape in Victoria is a little different to the other states. Councils themselves are largely responsible for sourcing their own training through TAFEs or other registered training organisations. Discussions with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) confirm that in general training is under-resourced and tends to be driven by regulatory requirements for staff to have certain qualifications (e.g. workers in Home and Community Care are required to have a Certificate 3 qualification).

Recently the MAV presented the findings of its research into the profile of the local government workforce presented in *Characteristics of the Victorian Local Government Workforce* published in 2011. In 2006 it had released a discussion paper on workforce planning which discussed the issue of skills shortage as well as identifying some key challenges that will affect the local government workforce including:

- Demographic change, the ageing of the population and the shrinking workforce
- Increasing competition for employees across a range of areas
- Skill shortages in a number of occupations required by local government to serve the community
- Increased employee expectations for flexible working arrangements
- Changes in the community's demand for particular services.

From 2006 to 2009 the MAV also facilitated two workforce planning forums, one for metropolitan and another for rural councils. These forums were made up of human resource practitioners and met five times a year to discuss workforce planning and HR issues.

4.7   Western Australia

As part of its Local Government Reform Program the Department of Local Government in Western Australia has introduced an Integrated Planning and Reporting framework, guidelines and tools to improve the practice of strategic planning in local government. The model is similar to the one used in NSW. In addition, the WA approach includes four areas for performance management: strategic planning, asset management, long term financial planning and workforce planning. In the DLG's first assessment against these criteria a very small percentage of councils met the baseline in all four areas. Strategic and workforce planning is in the early stages, workforce planning not having been undertaken previously. Councils' payroll systems are often not sufficient for them to be able to collect data on their workforce. Priority is being given to capacity building in workforce planning. As a first step, the DLG is developing a tool kit to assist councils in developing workforce plans and it is recognised that this will be a long term process.[11] It is anticipated that LGMA and WALGA will work with DLG as the process of implementation is put in place.

4.8   Summary

The picture of training and capacity building in workforce planning varies greatly from state to state with some organisations having the resources to implement well funded state-wide programs while in other regions work has been limited. Within this context strengthening mechanisms to share learning and experience across states will help to even out some of this diversity in capacity and enable a more coherent approach to workforce planning and development.

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[11] As it becomes available, the DLG will make resources and information available on workforce planning through its website http://integratedplanning.dlg.wa.gov.au/Page.aspx?PID=72.

5. Key Challenges

This paper has highlighted several key challenges to systematic implementation of workforce planning and development across Australian local government, including a lack of high level support and commitment within many councils, the need for capacity building, the importance of access to quite detailed data, and that training alone is not sufficient but must be accompanied by on-going support for councils to formulate and implement workforce plans.

5.1   High level support and commitment

One of the challenges which came up repeatedly during conversations with staff from LGAs, LGMAs, state agencies as well as some councils is the lack of strategic importance accorded to workforce planning and development. This is not unique to local government. In his article on managing skills shortages in the public sector, Freyens (2011) explains that agency leaders are usually poor at integrating human resource functions with organisational strategy and tend to deny human resource (HR) departments the leeway needed to project and suggest new organisational structures, particularly when these disturb established organisational culture.

Human resource departments traditionally perform two main functions: as custodians of HR policy in the organisation and as providers of training and staff development. Although these functions are important at the big-picture level, they are not perceived as such by senior executives on a daily basis, nor are they sufficient for strategic planning and development. Line HR managers usually know of particular skills shortfalls but have limited autonomy and may not be rewarded for showing initiative and entrepreneurship. A related problem is a lack of hierarchical support and engagement for integrating workforce planning processes into business plans (Freyens 2011). One solution is to ensure that if they are not part of the senior management team (which may not always be appropriate) HR managers have access to strategic decision making forums when necessary to address workforce planning issues. In addition to senior management, endorsement from councillors for workforce planning is also important.

In NSW and WA, workforce planning strategies are mandatory under integrated planning and reporting requirements. As stated above, to support councils in the development of these strategies the NSW Division of Local Government has developed some useful web based tools and resources.[12] And in WA these are in the process of being developed.[13] The NSW guidelines explain that workforce planning should not be considered solely the role of Human Resources and needs to be driven by all executives, managers and supervisors. Workforce planning issues should be led by the four year delivery program[14]. The introduction of workforce planning strategies will require decisions to be made at strategic and operational levels. Responsibility for implementing the workforce strategy needs to be clear, with built-in reporting mechanisms.

Most importantly, workforce planning requires leadership by the CEO (termed General Manager in some states) and council-wide ownership of the strategy's implementation by ensuring directors and line managers have clear responsibilities, and that communication strategies are in place so that all staff are engaged in the process, can understand the benefits of the workforce strategy, and can provide feedback.

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[12] www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/dlg_IntegratedPlanningIndex.asp?sectionid=1&mi=20&ml=10&AreaIndex=WFPlan&index=1001

[13] As they become available, the DLG will make resources and information available on workforce planning through its website http://integratedplanning.dlg.wa.gov.au/Page.aspx?PID=72.

[14] The delivery program is part of the suite of plans and strategies which make up Integrated Planning and Reporting in NSW. It is a 4 year plan to deliver the 10 year community strategic plan developed by councils in consultation with their communities.

The Head Workforce Planner of Workforce Blueprint confirmed that there is a need to develop an understanding amongst council executives of the objectives of workforce planning so that it moves beyond a compliance issue to becoming a strategic planning tool. Often councils realise the importance of workforce planning when they are faced with a crisis such as an unexpected resignation from a critical role or the inability to recruit for a position. Workforce planning can help councils to manage this risk. A particular challenge is helping councils gauge the level of detail and depth of analysis required for workforce planning. The 'right' approach for any particular council will sit on a continuum ranging from a simple, straightforward analysis to extensively researched and detailed strategic plans. Councils need support in being able to understand what level of detail and analysis is required to address their particular objectives.[15]

The Director of Workforce Planning Australia suggested that workforce planning should become part of the education curriculum for students aspiring to management positions in the public or private sectors, including training and development which specialises in local government. An understanding of the strategic nature of workforce planning should be part of the subject matter covered in public sector and business management courses at undergraduate and post graduate level.

5.2 The importance of data

A second challenge highlighted by the interviews was the lack of data available to councils to be able to plan. ACELG's current project on *National Minimum Data Sets for Local Government* (ACELG 2011) goes some way to addressing this problem. This project will facilitate the collection of data for workforce planning together with information for promoting the role of women in local government. The proposed data set will contain information such as:

1. Council name and state/territory
2. Total number of elected representatives (councillors, mayor, president etc.) by gender and age
3. Gender of current Mayor/President and whether the position is popularly elected
4. Total council workforce by age and gender
5. Total council workforce by educational attainment and gender
6. Total council workforce by hours worked by gender
7. Number of staff in target groups by hours worked and gender
8. Total council workforce by management responsibility by council section by gender
9. Total council workforce by occupation by council section by gender by age (age optional)
10. Total council workforce in training programs by occupation by age by gender
11. Number of new staff hired in the previous 12 months by gender and occupation
12. Number of staff separations in the previous 12 months by gender and occupation
13. Current vacancies
14. Total annual council payroll
15. Total annual council expenditure on all forms of training
16. Workforce/EEO/training plans
17. Identified positions.

The information gathered from this survey will be available for councils to access through an internet portal. They will be able to analyse data at different levels including state, region and individual councils. The project is also gathering existing data relevant to the local government workforce from a wide range of sources such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Department of Education Employment and Workforce Relations, Department of Immigration and Citizenship etc.

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[15] Wendy Perry, Workforce Blueprint, personal communication.

and packaging it up so that it is more easily accessible for local government practitioners. ACELG has begun publication of a Local Government Fact Sheet series as a first step to making relevant data more easily available to councils.[16]

While the minimum data set will be a useful step forward, there is still a need for accompanying support to allow councils to collect and understand more detailed data. The national minimum data set will only give councils a general profile of their staff and the labour force, but local governments still require more refined council-specific information (e.g. when are particular people planning on retiring, especially those in critical roles; career aspirations of staff; family commitments and interest in flexible working arrangements). This requires more than just a data collection and analysis ability, a robust management approach characterised by strong relationships with staff is also needed.

Senior executives and HR managers need to understand what kind of information is required at what level of detail. This must be accompanied by an ability to understand correlations between data sets to understand the full implications and identify areas of risk and possible gaps. Managers must have the knowledge and skills to access the tools and analysis required to use this data to inform decision making and planning (Wendy Perry, personal communication).

5.3   Training is not enough

Discussions with stakeholders have highlighted that training alone is not sufficient. State LGAs and LGMA divisions offer a range of training courses in workforce planning. As well, there are many guidelines and frameworks freely available to councils on the internet and through government agencies to help councils think about the process of workforce planning. However, as Jenny Bell, Workforce Planning Officer at Shoalhaven Council put it, these training courses generally do not help staff understand what workforce planning means for them in their daily working lives. In addition to training there is a need for more long term mentoring or peer support to enable councils to integrate workforce planning into wider planning processes. This is an upfront investment but as the practice becomes embedded in the way that councils plan and organise themselves the requirement for this kind of support should reduce.

The success of the Workforce Planning Reference Group facilitated by the LGA SA is a case in point. It provides council staff with access to a peer network enabling them to learn from and support each other as they implement workforce planning and development. At Shoalhaven Council they have established a Workforce Planning Officer position whose role is to support staff to integrate workforce planning into the way they do business as well as to provide help and advice. These kinds of supplements to training are vital if workforce planning is to be done well and provide a useful planning tool, but more importantly it must also be integrated and aligned with wider council planning processes. A workforce plan which sits apart from broader strategic and corporate plans will, in the end, have little impact.

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[16] www.acelg.org.au/page.php?pageid=116

6.   Next Steps

Given the analysis above, there are many opportunities for strengthening the abilities of councils in Australia to understand and implement workforce planning. This section outlines a few suggestions for initiatives for the consideration of local government associations, professional institutes, state agencies, GSA and others.

6.1   Capacity building

The capacity of councils to undertake workforce planning and reporting must be strengthened. This should begin with developing a shared understanding of what workforce planning and development means, as well as its objectives at national, state and council. Of particular importance is senior executive commitment to act on the basis that employee training and development is vital to retaining and progressing staff.

But as stated above training alone is not sufficient and more work needs to be done to strengthen existing human resource and management information networks so that they are better able to encompass and address workforce planning. Some LGAs and LGMA divisions facilitate human resources networks and forums and these could be targeted as entry points to increase discussion and awareness of how to address common challenges in workforce planning and development. For example, in the Northern Territory many councils struggle with high staff turnover. Some work could be done in collaboration with LGANT's Human Resources Forum to strengthen discussion on how to address this problem collectively, and to develop a tool box of response options, drawing on experience in other jurisdictions such as NSW and WA. Options are essential: a 'one size fits all' approach would not be suitable.

The documentation and sharing of good practice and innovation will also help to provide evidence, examples and information to councils. This paper contains a few examples of what councils are doing to improve workforce planning and development. There are many more which remain undocumented and unshared. The NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet's 2003 publication *Workforce Planning: a Guide* provides a series of case studies of how a cross section of state government agencies and other institutions have carried out workforce planning. A similar type of approach could be taken for local government, providing a series of case studies demonstrating how councils have translated guidelines, support and training into the development of strategies to address workforce planning and development, as well as documenting achievements and benefits.

6.2   Inclusion into professional development

One approach to increasing knowledge and awareness of workforce planning and development is to increase its presence and profile within professional development training curricula. For example, the UTS Centre for Local Government in NSW includes a module on workforce planning and development in one of the subjects that form part of its postgraduate Diploma in Local Government Management. In a similar vein, collaboration with and between LGAs and LGMA divisions could strengthen the integration of workforce planning and development modules into their professional development courses for managers, as well as the professional networks they host. This would include networks for human resource professionals but also importantly networks for other senior executives including CEOs. A similar approach could be taken with other professional bodies which represent staff who typically rise through the ranks to gain senior executive positions, such as IPWEA.

6.3   Support for horizon scanning

The Local Government Practice Unit based at LGMA National is carrying out research and scoping on the implications of an ageing workforce for councils. Similar kinds of research could be carried out for some of the other common challenges which councils will face over the coming years. This paper touches on these briefly but there is merit in a more detailed and considered analysis of how population and economic growth as well as climate and technological change will impact on councils and the implications for their workforce planning.

6.4   Align data gathering

One challenge is to be able to compare data across councils, regions and states in order to identify possible areas of collaboration and alignment in workforce planning and development. The LGAQ Industry and Skills Workforce Development report states that a strategic approach to workforce planning at a council, regional and state level is a vital step in identifying and addressing capacity and capability issues of the sector and to ensure that service levels maintain pace with community expectations (LGAQ 2011). ACELG's National Minimum Data Set project will go some way to addressing this need, but at a smaller scale it would be helpful if neighbouring councils or those belonging to regional organisations could adopt a common and collaborative approach to data collection, analysis and planning.

6.5   Drawing together the patchwork

There is currently a patchwork of available resources, experience and initiatives at the national and state levels to strengthen local government workforce planning and development. Some approaches are more comprehensive than others, some focus on particular aspects. There is an array of on-line support, traditional training, facilitated discussions through professional networks, mentoring and personal assistance and various combinations of the above. Each council will require different kinds of support depending on their context, existing capacities and objectives. Drawing together resources from different states and different organisations, and making them available to councils in more coherent packages will help them to be able to access the resources and support they need. This could be done through documentation or through a website allowing councils to readily see all the different kinds of training, information and support available across Australia, thus allowing them to choose a suite of tools tailored to their needs.

6.6   Conclusion

This paper has provided only an initial overview of the challenges Australian councils face in terms of workforce development and planning. There are common elements which most councils must consider when they look at a 5, 10 or 15 year horizon. The ageing workforce, business succession planning, population increase, climate and technological change are only a few examples. Across Australia, local government's ability to carry out this strategic analysis varies considerably but generally there is a need to strengthen current approaches and to look for ways to increase support to the sector. This paper offers some preliminary recommendations, but discussions on how best to improve training and capacity building in workforce planning and development must continue and expand.

Annex 1: Examples of Available Training and Resources

New South Wales	
LGSA	2 day Program, Workforce Planning: The Journey in Local Government facilitated by Wendy Perry, Workforce Blueprint 2012 flyer
DLG	A useful website guide and resources on workforce planning for councils – Link
Department of Premier and Cabinet	Workforce Planning – Facilitator's Guide
Department of Premier and Cabinet	Workforce Planning – A Guide, 2003
Queensland	
Department of Justice and Attorney General	Industrial Relations Website – Adapting your business to the ageing workforce
South Australia	
LGA SA	2 day Workforce planning essentials 2011-2012 LGA SA Training program
Tasmania	
Tascoss	Website on the challenges of workforce development in the Community Services Sector in Tasmania - Link
Western Australia	
Department of Training and Workforce Development	Website with resources and information on workforce development in WA - Link
National/International	
Standards Australia	HB 299-2008 Workforce Planning Handbook Guidelines available for purchase through SAI Global - Link
Business, Work and Ageing, Research Centre and Swinburne University	The Centre carries out research on the economic and social consequences of workforce ageing. It undertakes research and provides specialised consultancy services to industry. They have longstanding experience of research in this area and are willing to share this with others. - Link

UK IDEA	This resource provides good practice ideas and examples to support local government and their partners in addressing their most critical local workforce challenges. It is organised according to the workforce strategy's five key priorities, each with its own good practice library of case studies: • Organisational development • Leadership development • Skills development • Recruitment and retention • Pay and rewards Link
Australian Human Resources Institute	AHRI offer a range of courses relevant to Workforce Planning and Development. The most relevant are: • Workforce metrics essentials: beyond numbers, charts and reports • Workforce insights: empowering analytics for driving business decisions • Workforce planning essentials: putting it in practice or making it real • Strategic workforce planning: understand and mitigate strategy execution risks For further information on AHRI, click here. Training brochure
Skill Ecosystem	Skill ecosystem is a concept adapted from biology that refers to a self-sustaining concentration of workforce skills and knowledge in an industry or a region, for example the South Australian wine industry or the super funds management industry in Sydney. The ecosystem metaphor comes from management literature to emphasise the interdependencies between organisations, individuals and institutions that generate innovation or growth. The term 'skill ecosystem' was coined by David Finegold to describe how knowledge and skills are formed in the cluster of computer and biomedical firms in Silicon Valley, California. - Link
Workforce Planning Australia	Workforce Planning Australia (WPA) has in 2011 and 2012 been collaborating with LGAs in South Australia and the Northern Territory to provide advice, training, mentoring and information to councils on workforce planning. They are regarded as market leaders in Australia in workforce planning and are uniquely positioned in the training market as they are also the only RTO in Australia dedicated solely to workforce planning. WPA has extensive international and national industry wide experience. They are currently working directly with 46 Australian councils and have provided advice and support to the Local Government industry in New Zealand and in the UK. In their view the challenges that local governments face are not that dissimilar to other industries and centre on the need for good governance, strong executive leadership and capability building in proven workforce planning methods and practice. According to Julie Sloan, Founder and Director of Workforce Planning Australia, Local Government can play a principle role in leading regional workforce planning and development by demonstrating strong governance frameworks through regional collaboration and through providing examples of the benefits of effective planning and also by acting as a role model for business and industry in their LGAs. Julie says there is significant international research in particular out of Canada and USA that validates the value of regional workforce planning and development. WPA consider workforce planning as the driver of sustainable workforce development strategies and regard it is a business imperative.

In addition to challenges posed by accessing quality workforce planning data, executive understanding of the new discipline of workforce planning, and the continued 'blurring' of workforce planning and workforce development, Ms Sloan also explained that Workforce Planning can be seen as a "soft science" and not understood as a rigorous evidence based planning tool which requires collection and analysis of data that in turn feeds into strategic planning at all levels (local, regional, and State) and in all departments (corporate, financial and HRs) of the organisation.   She says, this understanding of workforce planning needs to be integrated into normal business planning cycles and in the education of future professionals either at under or post graduate level or within continuous professional development programs.

Essentially Workforce Planning Australia assists councils to establish strong frameworks for their planning which are aligned to the Standards Australia Guidelines on Workforce Planning (2008). This framework enables councils to go through the process of analysis of the current workforce, scoping future needs, identifying risks to fulfilling those needs and finally developing risk mitigation strategies. The focus is on understanding the processes so that councils are able to generate the evidence they need to carry out effective planning and retain and attract their required workforce. In addition Workforce Planning Australia provides a range of tools and templates to assist organisations including:

Workforc*e*-profiler™
This tool provides a simple and cost effective way to gather, analyse and compare workforce data. Workforc*e*-profiler™ has been designed specifically for the purpose of undertaking Workforce Planning and Profiling. It enables Quantitative and Qualitative data to be gathered on any size or type of workforce (paid or volunteer). The Workforc*e*-profiler™ tool is user friendly and 100% flexible. Coupled with comprehensive analytical capabilities, the tool can provide questions prepared and formatted around individual client requirements.

   Benefits
   - Complete Anonymity for Workforce Data Gathering
   - Valid Reliable Data Collection
   - Standard and Customised Questionnaire Methodology (for Comparative Data Analysis)
   - Core Workforce Planning Data
   - Reports: Participation Rate / Statistical Analysis without Filter
   - Recommendations

In collaboration with Workforce Planning Australia's Planning and Profiling methodology and framework, it provides accurate and credible workforce information. WPA use their own experience to guide clients through the formation of critical Workforce Development questions and business-specific Workforce Development templates. They also have a collection of **core and tailored questions** which assist clients with comparative analysis across critical Workforce Planning issues.

Supply Gap Calculator - **Know-it™**
The WPA Supply Gap Calculator is best utillised as one part of the more comprehensive Workforce Planning process, however it can be used in isolation to assist with producing Workforce Analytics on which Workforce Development strategies can be based.
This unique tool enables evidence based workforce planning. In particular it projects workforce supply gaps by timeframe and against a range of scenarios. It enables 24/7 access by management to critical workforce data.

Internet Mapping Tool - **Know-it™**
Assisting client to keep Workforce Planning a 'live/active' part of business. The WPA Internet Mapping Tool provides a single online environment designed to house the data

and analytics collected through the **Workforce-profiler™** tool and **Know-it™ - Supply Gap Calculator** tools. Critical data gathered and analysed is mapped using interactive icons which enable access to and updating of critical and core workforce planning information 24/7

The WPA workforce planning tools are available for licence individually or as a three-in-one option.

Workforce Planning Australia also has a series of templates available to help councils to gather evidence to identify crucial roles, carryout succession planning and to understand and analyse data on labour market supply relevant to their Council and by nominated industries. – Link to Workforce Planning Tools

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Workforce BluePrint

Workforce BluePrint has worked with councils in New South Wales and South Australia to help them create their Workforce Planning and Development Strategies. They support councils to develop an understanding of workforce planning including clear objectives for this approach particularly at executive level. In their experience 75% of councils experience similar workforce issues regardless of size and location. As a result there is a lot of common ground for councils in terms of their workforce development and support needs.   One key area for training is strengthening councils ability to understand what kind of data they needs, to gather this information and most importantly how to correlate data sets and understand what the numbers are telling them in order to be able to identify risks, gaps and their implications.

The Workforce Blueprint model for workforce planning is a 5 Step process:

Step 1- Context and Environment
Why? Why do we need to undertake workforce planning? Why is it important? What are our goals for this Workforce Plan? What are the performance measures for our Workforce Plan?

Strategic Objectives What are our organisation's strategic objectives (link to strategic plan)? How does this affect our workforce? What will we focus on?

External Environment What is happening in the external environment (at an industry or regional level)? What policies and initiatives (national, state, local) are being implemented? What challenges are being faced? (for example skills/labour shortages, attraction and retention, funding)

Internal Environment What is happening in the internal environment? What is your business planning process? What are the links between business planning and workforce issues? What current initiatives, projects and services are being provided? What funding sources are accessed? What is the organisational structure? What is the organisation's current capability and capacity to deliver your products and services?

Step 2 – Current Workforce Profile
What is your current workforce profile? What are the current skills and competencies of your workforce? What are your strengths and development needs? What is the consultation with your current workforce telling you regarding workforce issues and what is working well or what could be improved? What are the current workforce priorities, based on your workforce profiling and analysis?

Step 3 – Future Workforce Profile
What future products and services will be provided by the organisation (link to strategic plan)? What will the future environment require? What are the workforce implications and issues? What is the workforce supply and demand? What future skills and competencies are required?   What is the consultation with your workforce telling you

regarding future workforce issues? What are the future workforce priorities, based on your workforce profiling and analysis?

Step 4 – Gap Analysis and Closing Strategies
What are the key areas of need/action to move from where the organisation is now to where it wants to be? NOW…Prioritise the 'issues' and develop an action plan to address gap closing strategies.

Step 5 – Conclusion, review, evaluation strategy and next steps
What are the key outcomes of your workforce action plan? How will you evaluate the strategies in your workforce plan? What are the next steps for implementation of your workforce action plan?

The Workforce Planning Tools website provides a range of available resources including tools and templates to help address workforce challenges including team development, organisational development, small business development, strategic planning, industry development, major projects, networks and clusters, supply chains and value chains, community development, remote, rural and regional development. Other specific topics include:

- 5 steps to building a workforce plan which means you can follow a simple process and produce your own plan;
- Building a business case for gender diversity and retaining women in the workforce;
- Using online workforce planning and development tools, for example Skillsbook
- Strategic planning to define your direction which means you can work towards clear outcomes, measure your performance and action plan your success;
- How to undertake a training needs analysis;
- Workforce management model that helps you with definitions and a common understanding of terms which means you'll be talking the same language; and
- A Checklist for your existing workforce plan.

Workforce BluePrint provides mentoring in workforce planning and development enabling clients to manage the process with independent and professional
help. Customised conference key notes and workshops, pick n mix workshop topics and the facilitation of a Workforce Architects program are provided to build knowledge, understanding and practice in workforce development and planning.

Managing simple to complex workforce planning projects and implementing practical workforce development strategies such as training needs analysis, capability/competency frameworks, skills profiling, and gap closing strategies in ways that build capability, capacity & productivity is our mission.

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WORLD-CLASS LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO MEET THE EMERGING CHALLENGES OF 21ST CENTURY AUSTRALIA

ABOUT ACELG

ACELG is a unique consortium of universities and professional bodies that have a strong commitment to the advancement of local government. The consortium is led by the University of Technology Sydney's Centre for Local Government, and includes the University of Canberra, the Australia and New Zealand School of Government, Local Government Managers Australia and the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia. In addition, the Centre works with program partners to provide support in specialist areas and extend the Centre's national reach. These include Charles Darwin University and Edith Cowan University.

PROGRAM DELIVERY

ACELG's activities are grouped into six program areas:

- Research and Policy Foresight
- Innovation and Best Practice
- Governance and Strategic Leadership
- Organisation Capacity Building
- Rural-Remote and Indigenous Local Government
- Workforce Development

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