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INTRODUCTION

This Interim Report provides a summary of the key points and issues raised during the consultative process with industry to determine viable management and coordination structures for the LGA to:

- support research and development of appropriate education and training initiatives and strategies which will benefit the local government industry
- provide for the delivery of education and training services and products which meet the needs of and are accessible to Council Members and all occupational levels of the local government in South Australia
- formulate responses and/or initiatives to State and National Government education and training policies

and assist with the identification of current and emerging education and training needs of the local government industry.

The consultative process has involved:

- paper based survey of all Councils (*Refer Attachment 1 Survey Instrument Results*)
- structured telephone consultations with Regional Associations, designated Professional Groups, past Members of the LGTA Board, the LGA's interstate counterparts and the Australian Local Government Training. (*Refer Attachments 2 Consultative Instruments*)
- conduct of a Focus Group for Members of the Human Resource Network (*Refer Attachment 3 Consultative Instrument*).
- liaison with LGA Officers including Officers responsible for the Work-Force Planning Project, the Local Government Research & Development Scheme and the management of the current LGA training program. At the client's request, contact was also made with the South Australian Public Administration Industry Training Board (SA-PAITAB), the Executive Officer and current Local Government Representative and the Office for the Commissioner for Public Employment. Results of these contacts are provided within the body of this Report.
- desk research of current and past education and training arrangements and services for the Industry including those previously managed by the Local Government Training Authority (*Refer Attachment 4 Research Readings*)

To assist the second stage of this Project, it is proposed that senior managers of the LGA, in conjunction with the consultants, meet to workshop the findings of the results of the Review process to date. This Interim Report forms a basis for the Workshop. It aims to stimulate informed discussion and exploration of viable models to provide appropriate and viable structures for the management and coordination of future training and education functions for Local Government.

This Report is divided into three separate sections, each one addressing key points emerging from different aspects of the consultative process eg.

- Results of the paper based Industry Survey
- Results of the telephone consultations with various groups/individuals
- Issues & Options for Consideration

SECTION 1 – RESULTS OF INDUSTRY SURVEY

68 Councils (50 country and 18 metropolitan) were surveyed using a paper based structured Questionnaire comprising 13 questions which sought a rating and/or comment on areas which would effect the decision making outcomes of the Review. (Refer Attachment 1)

The return rate of 30 country and 14 metropolitan (44/64%) provides a reasonable market sample on which to draw conclusion. (Refer Attachment 1.1.5 Market Sample)

Given the difference in both numbers of metro to country respondents and other inherent factors which differentiate between the two market segments, where appropriate and possible, separate analysis comments have been constructed for each.

1. Changes & Challenges occurring in Local Government likely to impact on education and training needs.

Across the Sector the highest ranking eg. 50% or more were:

- New Local Government Legislation
- Links between the Development Act and the Local Government Act i.e. strategic management planning
- Developing strategic management plans for Council
- Role and need for policy development
- Performance measurement and bench marking
- Future enterprise bargaining and workplace change strategies
- Service delivery strategies & options eg. Competitive Tendering
- Local Government role in economic development
- Technical and operational skills development of field staff.

However, a closer analysis of these ratings indicate that while metropolitan and country Councils share a common and relatively high rating in the areas of:

- New Local Government legislation
- Understanding the links between the Development Act and Local Government Act ie strategic management planning
- Performance measurement and benchmarking, and
- Developing strategic management plans for Council

Country Councils placed far greater emphasise than metropolitan Councils on:

- The role and need for policy development
- The role of Councils as Planning Authorities
- Future enterprise bargaining and workplace change strategies
- Identifying community needs and preparing community development strategies, and
- Waste Management and recycling

Metropolitan Councils' responses were less definitive within the sample of responses with many issues sharing around a 50% rating higher or lower in areas such as:

- New Local Government Legislation
- Forming partnerships with communities, private enterprise
- Responding to environmental health issues
- Developing strategic management plans for Council
- Service delivery strategies & options eg. Competitive tendering
- Technical and operational skills development for field staff.

(Refer to Attachment 1/1.1 – Survey Results Changes & Challenges)

These trends were also evident in the telephone consultations (documented in Section 2 of the Report) with representatives from the LGTA Board and the HR Network.

However, it is interesting to note that most of the Review responses, both metropolitan and country, which rated high do not readily correlate with the findings of the focus groups recently conducted by the Workforce Planning Project Team during which a similar question was posed.

In particular the low rating by the Review’s respondents on areas related to Information Technology is contrary to the Workforce Planning Project team’s findings. This may be due to the different focus of those participating in each consultative process or the context in which the question was placed.

(Refer to Attachment 1/1.2 Workforce Planning Project)

Provision for additional ratings within the Survey Instrument for this question produced a high rating from individual respondents in the areas of:

- Quality systems
- OHSW (2 respondents)
- Innovative service delivery
- Leadership development
- Political savvy
- Managing existing resources effectively
- New food legislation
- National pollution Inventory

Current practices for addressing education and training needs.

From the Survey results it appears Councils are currently using a full range of strategies to meet the training and education needs of Council Members and staff.

Most used practices across the Sector were:

- Networking with other Councils
- In-house training using own resource and expertise
- In-house training using external resources and expertise
- Supporting staff/Council Members to attend courses etc. offered by private training providers/consultants
- Supporting staff/Council Members to attend courses etc. offered by the LGA
- Combination of own and external resources and expertise
- Attendance at accredited courses

Least used practices across the Sector were:

- Through flexible delivery – on line learning and self paced print based resources

The major differences between metropolitan and country Councils practices for meeting current needs were:

- Metropolitan Councils appear to use and favour attendance at accredited courses and access to study leave more than country.
- Metropolitan Councils appear to have less reliance on networking with other Councils than country.
- Metropolitan Councils appear to have a greater capacity to carry out in-house training using a combination of internal and external resources and expertise
- Country Councils place greater emphasis on supporting staff and/or Council Members to attend courses, workshops etc. offered by the LGA and private training providers/consultant with a slight preference for LGA organised activities.
- Around 50% of metropolitan Councils support the use of courses, workshops etc. offered by the LGA and private training providers/consultants. However, the preference here, although slight, is towards using private training providers/consultants.

Other practices identified were:

- Long term professional development leave
- Secondment/Staff exchanges
- Payment of tertiary fees (50%)
- Scholarships
- Future leader development Centre
- Video conference using PC's
- Travel conferences.

(Refer Attachment 1/1.3 Survey Summary – Current Practices for addressing education and training needs)

2. **Preference for meeting education and training needs**

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferences, in terms of methodology, for meeting education and training needs of Council Members and staff in four categories eg. would use/might use/wouldn't use and not relevant.

As a **Sector**, responses indicate that most methodologies appear to be acceptable with responses in the “Wouldn't Use” and “Not Relevant” being a very small proportion of the Survey sample.

The highest **Sector** ranking “**Would Use**” methods were:

- In-house training using external resources and expertise (38)
- Combination of own and external resources (36)
- Staff/Council Members attending short courses, workshops offered by the LGA (34)

- Staff/Council Members attending courses, workshops offered by private providers/consultants (33)
- On-the-job training using external workplace trainers and assessors (30)
- Through attendance at industry accredited courses (30)

“**Might Use**” Sector preference ratings were:

- On-line learning (27)
- Self-paced learning using multi media (27)
- Self paced learning by correspondence (26)
- Self paced learning using print based training resources (22)

The Sector wide preferences and flexibility correlated with the independent analysis of both metropolitan and country responses. However, based on a % of responses received from either metropolitan or country there were differences eg.

Metropolitan Councils indicated marginal preference for:

- Access to study leave
- Participation in accredited courses/formal education programs to acquire recognised qualifications
- Workplace mentoring and coaching from within the organisation
- On-the-job training using own workplace trainers and assessors, and
- Indicated they “Might Use” self paced learning by correspondence.

Country Councils indicated **marginal** preference for:

- On-the job training using external workplace trainers and assessors
- Networking with other Councils, and
- Indicated they “Might Use” on-line learning, self-paced learning using multi media and/or print-based training resources.

(Refer Attachment 1/1.4 Survey Summary – Preferences for meeting education and training needs)

3. Training Priorities

The relative priority ranking for categories of training needs for the five groups listed below was established using a simple points allocation system i.e. 3 points for highest priority, 2 points for second priority and 1 point for third priority.

Overall priority was established by totalling all the points given for a particular category. The proportion of total respondents nominating a category as their first priority is indicated where relevant.

4.1 Council Members

Legislation

This category received the greatest number of total weighting points for Council Member training needs. Approximately 70% of all respondents indicated legislation was a priority training need.

A quarter of respondents indicated The Local Government Act was the highest training priority. Second overall priority was the Development Act with a

quarter of respondents indicating this was either a second or third priority training need.

Strategic Planning

Two thirds of respondents indicated this area was one of their three training priorities. The proportion of respondents indicating this was a second or third priority is responsible for this category being ranked second overall.

There would appear to be strong associations with training needs in the Local Government Act and the Development Act, the links between these Acts and the role of Council Members in strategic management planning.

General Roles and Responsibilities of Council Members

Half of respondents indicated this category as being one of their three training priorities, with half of those respondents rating this as their highest priority.

Communication Skills

A number of responses are linked under this single heading, with this category being ranked fourth overall e.g. meeting procedures, media relations, public speaking, facilitation skills, community engagement, decision making being indicated.

A third of all respondents indicated some type of communication related skills were one of their three training need priorities.

Other Categories

Other categories indicated which were included in 10% or less of responses were:

- Finance
- Policy development
- Governance and ethics
- IT, telecommunication and related issues

Category	Training Need Indicated % All respondents	Priority 1 % of respondents	Priority 2 or 3 % of respondents
Legislation issues	70	45	55
Loc. Govt. Act	25	62	38
Dev. Act	25	38	62
Strategic planning	66	23	77
Roles/responsibilities	52	53	47
Communication skills	42	36	64
Other	-	-	-

Table 1 – Council Member Training Priorities

4.2 Senior Management

Management Skills

Not unexpectedly this broad category was ranked highest priority. For purposes of analysis a number of sub categories are listed in order of priority:

Strategic management/planning

Half of all respondents indicated this area of training need.

More than half of these respondents indicated this to be their highest priority.

Human resource management/leadership

Just under half of respondents indicated this area of training need.

More than half of these respondents ranked this as their highest priority.

Other management categories

A third of all respondents indicated one of the following in one of their three training priorities:

- Management (no other specifics)
- Managing performance
- Cultural/change management
- Continuous improvement
- Business/financial management

Legislation

A quarter of all respondents indicated the Local Government Act and/or its implementation represented a training need. Half of these respondents rated this as their highest priority.

Eighteen percent of all respondents indicated keeping up with legislative changes represented a training need. Half of these respondents ranked this as their highest priority.

Other Categories

Other categories indicated which were included in 10% or less of responses were:

- IT and telecommunication management
- Community engagement/consultation

Category	Training Need Indicated % All respondents	Priority 1 % of respondents	Priority 2 or 3 % of respondents
Strategic planning	53	61	39
HR management Leadership	47	56	44
Loc. Govt. Act	26	55	45
Legislation/changes	18	50	50

Table 2 – Senior Management Training Priorities

4.3 Middle Management

Management Skills

Sub categories are listed in order of indicated priority:

- Human resource management/leadership (*Just over half of respondents indicated this was a training need, with more than a third of these rating this as the highest priority*)

- Cultural change management (Approximately twenty percent of respondents indicated this was a training need. Half of these ranked this as their highest priority.)
- Managing performance (Just under twenty percent of respondents indicated this was a training need. Forty percent of these rated this as the highest priority.)
- Managing finance (Just under twenty percent of respondents indicated this was a training need, with none of these ranking this as the highest priority)
- Other management categories (in order of priority, in 10% or less of responses) were:
 - Planning
 - Strategic planning
 - Teambuilding
 - Time management

Legislation

A quarter of responses indicated training needs related to legislation. All responses to legislation were pooled for this category but the two main areas were compliance with the Local Government Act and legislative issues generally.

Category	Training Need Indicated % All respondents	Priority 1 % of respondents	Priority 2 or 3 % of respondents
HR management Leadership	55	38	62
Change management	21	50	50
Managing performance	17	40	60
Managing finance	17	-	100
Loc. Govt. Act , legislation	24	57	43

Table 3 – Middle Management Training Priorities

4.4 Professional Officers

This group represents a diverse range of professions. While the various professional occupational streams were not designated, ongoing professional development generally is the greatest indicated area of need for this group.

Professional Development

Responses relating to professional accreditation and best professional practice were combined in this category. Nearly half of all respondents indicated this was an area of need. Nearly half of these indicated this as their highest priority.

Legislation

All responses relating to legislation were combined. Keeping up with legislative updates was the most frequently mentioned category, followed by the Local Government Act compliance and implementation.

Nearly half of all respondents indicated this to be an area of need, with more than half of those ranking this as their highest priority.

Information Technology

Nearly a quarter of all respondents indicated training needs concerning either the use of technology or exploring further uses of this in their profession. A third of these respondents rated this as their highest priority.

Other Categories

Just over 10% of all respondents indicated a training need in the following areas:

- Planning
- Project management
- Communication skills

Category	Training Need Indicated % All respondents	Priority 1 % of respondents	Priority 2 or 3 % of respondents
Professional development	48	46	54
Legislation	48	55	45
Information technology	22	33	67

Table 4 – Professional Officers Training Priorities

4.5 Clerical and Front Line Staff

Indicated training needs and priorities for this group were:

Information Technology

All technology related responses were combined. While the specific nature of needs was not always indicated those mentioned specifically included the use of application software, the use of specialised applications e.g. payroll, records and information management, understanding and using in-house systems.

Nearly sixty percent of respondents indicated training needs in this area. Thirty percent of these ranked this as the highest priority.

Customer Service

Based on a weighted score this was the highest priority area of need. While only a third of respondents indicated this was an area of need, seventy five percent of these ranked this as their highest training need.

Communication Skills

Approximately twenty percent of respondents indicated this to be an area of need. The specific application of these skills is not clear i.e. whether these skills are related to customer service, communication within the team etc.

Teamwork

Although nearly a quarter of respondents indicated this to be a training need, none of the respondents ranked this as highest priority (87% of respondents ranked this as third priority).

There may be some correlation with teamwork needs, communication skills and customer service.

Other Categories

The following categories were indicated as a training need in approximately ten percent of responses:

- Public relations skills
- Legislation (Local Government Act, legislation changes)

Category	Training Need Indicated % All respondents	Priority 1 % of respondents	Priority 2 or 3 % of respondents
Information technology	59	30	70
Customer service	35	75	25
Communication skills	21	43	57
Teamwork	24	-	100

Table 5 – Clerical and Front Line Staff Training Priorities

4.6 Outdoor Staff

Indicated training needs and priorities for this group were:

Occupational Health and Safety

Based on a weighted score this was the greatest area of need and half of all respondents indicated this. Sixty percent of these respondents rated this as the highest priority.

Technical Skills Development

Technical skills development related to occupational category was ranked second, based on a weighted score. Just over a third of all respondents indicated this need. Half of these respondents ranked this as their highest priority.

Other categories

The following categories were indicated as a training need in approximately ten percent of responses:

- Machine/plant operations
- Formal skills path
- Communications/PR skills

Category	Training Need Indicated % All respondents	Priority 1 % of respondents	Priority 2 or 3 % of respondents
OHS	45	60	40
Technical skills	36	50	50
Teamwork	27	33	67
Customer service	21	29	71

Table 6 – Outdoor Staff Training Priorities

In addition to the above Survey results, a detailed response was received from the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Supervisory Officers Association identifying the following quite specific needs of outside workforce personnel:

- Work Zone Traffic Management
- Plan reading/levelling
- Chainsaw Operations
- Use and care of lifting equipment
- Manual handling
- Safety Issues/Purpose of safety equipment
- Compaction Course
- Machine Operations eg. Graders, Loaders
- Excavation Works
- Hydrology Course
- Liability and legislative responsibilities

5. Role of the LGA in facilitating education and training

The only responses considered for analysis in this section were those Councils who indicated either the LGA ‘**should**’ or ‘**should not**’ be involved in this area in facilitating education and training for the industry.

In attempt to identify trends and possible needs, a further distinction was made between metropolitan Councils and country Councils who gave either of the above responses.

Some categories with either ‘should’ or should not’ answers received relatively few responses when compared to the total sample. For the purposes of this analysis this has been taken to indicate that a particular category is not seen within the industry as a priority for the LGA. Similarly where responses ‘for’ or ‘against’ are reasonably close in number it is considered that this type of activity is unlikely to have the level of support to justify the LGA being involved.

Q. 5a) Providing information about:

	Should Metro	Should Country	No Metro	No Country
1) Reputable and LG experienced training providers/consultants.	7	24	1	0
2) Training courses that are relevant to Local Government.	8	26	1	1
3) Conferences & Seminars relevant to Local Government interstate and/or at a national level.	7	10	0	5

	Should Metro	Should Country	No Metro	No Country
4) Courses/Awards leading to qualifications for people working in local government.	5	16	2	3
5) National competency standards relevant to local government.	5	6	2	1
6) National training packages relevant to local government.	4	9	3	3
7) Training and Education best practice models.	4	9	2	1
8) Training and education bench marking case studies.	2	6	3	1

There is a clear indication by **both metropolitan and country Councils** that the LGA **should** be providing information to Councils about:

- Reputable and LG experienced training providers/consultants.
- Training courses that are relevant to Local Government.
- Courses/Awards leading to qualifications for people working in local government.
- National competency standards relevant to Local Government.

There is a clear indication by **metropolitan Councils** that the LGA **should** be providing information to Councils about:

- Conferences & Seminars relevant to Local Government interstate and/or at a national level.

There is some indication by **metropolitan Councils** that the LGA **should** be providing information to Councils about:

- National competency standards relevant to local government.

There is some indication by **metropolitan Councils** (*based on the relative size of the sample*) that the LGA **should not** be providing information to Councils about:

- Training and education bench marking case studies.
- National training packages relevant to local government.

There is some indication by **country Councils** (*about a third of the overall country Council sample*) that the LGA **should** be providing information to Councils about:

- Conferences and seminars relevant to Local Government interstate and/or at a national level.
- National training packages relevant to Local Government.
- Training and education best practice models.

Q. 5b) Providing advisory services such as:

	Should Metro	Should Country	No Metro	No Country
1) Advice and guidance to Councils on how to access expertise/resources to meet identified training needs.	3	25	3	0
2) Advice and guidance to Councils on how to find solutions to training issues.	2	16	1	0

	Should Metro	Should Country	No Metro	No Country
3) Co-ordination and management of whole of industry <u>advice/influence</u> to State and Federal Government on education and training needs/issues relevant to Local Government eg input into State Training Profile.	3	15	3	0
4) Co-ordination and management of whole of industry <u>responses</u> to State and Federal Governments agendas related to education and training needs/issues eg funding.	5	16	2	2
5) Industry perspective and comment on the development and review of curriculum related to the education and training needs of the Local Government industry eg at TAFE/Higher education level.	5	11	3	0
6) Industry perspective and comment on relevant Local Government education and training issues/needs to relevant Industry Training Boards at State and National levels.	5	10	3	0
7) Liaison and two-way information dissemination with interstate and national Local Government training bodies on education and training issues/initiatives.	5	18	3	1

There is some indication by **metropolitan and country Councils** (*relatively small number of responses*) that the LGA **should** be providing advisory services to Councils about:

- Co-ordination and management of whole of industry responses to State and Federal Governments agendas related to education and training needs/issues eg funding.

There is a clear indication by **country Councils** that the LGA **should** be providing advisory services to Councils about:

- Advice and guidance to Councils on how to access expertise/resources to meet identified training needs.
- Liaison and two-way information dissemination with interstate and national Local Government training bodies on education and training issues/initiatives.

There is some indication by **country Councils** (*relatively small number of responses*) that the LGA **should** be providing advisory services to Councils about:

- Advice and guidance to Councils on how to find solutions to training issues.
- Co-ordination and management of whole of industry advice/influence to State and Federal Government on education and training needs/issues relevant to Local Government eg input into State Training Profile.

There is some indication (*divided responses*) by **metropolitan Councils** that the LGA **should** be providing advisory services to Councils about:

- Industry perspective and comment on the development and review of curriculum related to the education and training needs of the Local Government industry eg at TAFE/Higher education level.
- Industry perspective and comment on relevant Local Government education and training issues/needs to relevant Industry Training Boards at State and National levels.
- Liaison and two-way information dissemination with interstate and national Local Government training bodies on education and training issues/initiatives.

There is some indication (relatively small number of responses) by **metropolitan Councils** that the LGA **should not** be providing advisory services to Councils about:

- Advice and guidance to Councils on how to find solutions to training issues.
- Co-ordination and management of whole of industry advice/influence to State and Federal Government on education and training needs/issues relevant to Local Government eg input into State Training Profile.

Q. 5c) Providing training services and/or delivery in areas such as:

	Should Metro	Should Country	No Metro	No Country
1) Conducting Training Needs Analysis for whole of industry.	1	8	6	6
2) Conducting Training Needs Analysis for individual Councils or groups of Councils.	2	6	4	4
3) Developing a Local Government Industry Training Plan.	0	9	6	3
4) Developing Training Plans for individual Councils.	0	6	9	7
5) Offering a general short course program for the Sector.	4	11	2	2
6) Offering special interest workshops/seminars on key issues confronting the industry.	8	25	1	0
7) Offering training and education consultancy services.	0	6	4	4
8) Offering training and education project management.	0	1	5	5
9) Developing and maintaining core education, training and professional development resources.	1	8	6	5
10) Establishing and maintaining a centralised location for publications relevant to education and training in Local Government.	2	13	2	0
11) Promoting and recognising education and training best practice methods and innovations of SA Councils at a state and national level eg. Awards.	3	12	0	0
12) Organising and/or coordinating national and international study tours.	1	8	5	4

There is a clear indication by **both metropolitan and country Councils** that the LGA **should** be providing training services and/or delivery to Councils in areas such as:

- Offering special interest workshops/seminars on key issues confronting the industry.

There is a clear indication by **metropolitan Councils** that the LGA **should not** be providing training services and/or delivery to Councils in areas such as:

- Conducting Training Needs Analysis for whole of industry.
- Conducting Training Needs Analysis for individual Councils or groups of Councils.
- Developing a Local Government Industry Training Plan.
- Developing Training Plans for individual Councils.
- Developing and maintaining core education, training and professional development resources.
- Organising and/or coordinating national and international study tours.
- Establishing and maintaining a centralised location for publications relevant to education and training in the industry.
- Offering training and education consultancy services.

There is **some** indication (*divided metro response, relatively small number of country responses*) by **metropolitan and country Councils** that the LGA **should** be providing training services and/or delivery to Councils in areas such as:

- Offering a general short course program for the Sector.

There is **some** indication (*relatively small number of responses*) by **country Councils** that the LGA **should** be providing training services and/or delivery to Councils in areas such as:

- Developing a Local Government Industry Training Plan.
- Establishing and maintaining a centralised location for publications relevant to education and training in Local Government.
- Promoting and recognising education and training best practice methods and innovations of SA Councils at a state and national level eg. Awards.
- Developing and maintaining core education, training and professional development resources.
- Organising and/or coordinating national and international study tours.

There is **some** indication (*divided and relatively small number of responses*) by **country Councils** that the LGA **should not** be providing training services and/or delivery to Councils in areas such as

- Conducting Training Needs Analysis for whole of industry.
- Conducting training needs analysis for individual Councils or groups of Councils
- Developing Training Plans for individual Councils.
- Offering training and education project management.

Q. 5d) Facilitating research and development by:

	Should Metro	Should Country	No Metro	No Country
1) Assisting Councils with the development of education and training proposals for research and development initiatives eg Local Government Research & Development Scheme.	1	12	1	1
2) Assisting Councils in securing appropriate project management consultants to carry out Research & Development Projects.	0	5	6	2
3) Applying and implementing Research & Development projects, <i>on behalf of Industry</i> , for education and training projects which will benefit the whole of Local Government Industry e.g. workforce planning.	3	20	2	1
4) Securing Research & Development funding for the evaluation of education and training strategies used in the Local Government Industry to assist with the maintenance/achievement of best practice and continuous improvement.	2	18	2	1

There is a clear indication by **metropolitan Councils** that the LGA **should not** be facilitating research and development by:

- Assisting Councils in securing appropriate project management consultants to carry out Research & Development Projects.

The relatively low number of responses in this entire category would suggest this is not a service metropolitan Councils require.

There is a clear indication by **country Councils** that the LGA **should** be facilitating research and development by:

- Applying and implementing Research & Development projects, *on behalf of Industry*, for education and training projects which will benefit the whole of Local Government Industry eg workforce planning.
- Securing Research & Development funding for the evaluation of education and training strategies used in the Local Government Industry to assist with the maintenance/achievement of best practice and continuous improvement

There is some indication (*relatively small number of responses*) by **country Councils** that the LGA **should** be facilitating research and development by:

- Assisting Councils with the development of education and training proposals for research and development initiatives eg Local Government Research & Development Scheme

There is some indication (*relatively small number of responses*) by **country Councils** that the LGA **should not** be facilitating research and development by:

- Assisting Councils in securing appropriate project management consultants to carry out research and development.

In contrast to metropolitan Councils, the facilitation of research and development seems to be an area of interest by country Councils, with the exception of the activity noted immediately above.

6. Training Plans

Respondents were asked to indicate if their Council had or intended to develop a Training and Development Plan.

- On a **Sector** basis a total of 42 responses were received of which 17 indicated their Councils already had a Training Plan in place; 21 indicated there was an intention to develop one and 4 indicated they neither had one nor intended to develop one.
- Of the 12 **metropolitan Councils** responding to this question, 8 indicated they had Training Plans in place and the remaining 4 were intending to develop one.
- **Country Council** responses (30 in total) showed that while only 8 actually had Training Plans in place, 18 intended to develop these. Only 4 country Councils indicated that would not be developing a Training Plan.

7. Use of National Local Government Competency Training Standards

Respondents were asked if their Council was using or intended to use the National Local Government Competency Standards to guide the training and education offered to staff.

- Across the **Sector** 50% indicated that they **would not use** these Standards.
- Only **2 metropolitan** Councils and **3 country** Councils indicated they were **currently using** these Standards.
- **10 Country** Councils and **4 metropolitan** Councils indicated that there was an **intention to use** the Standards.

Whilst the Survey did not provide an opportunity for respondents to comment on why 50% of the Sector would not use the National Competency Standards, comments made during the consultative processes with other Sector groups indicate the Standards are:

- more appropriate for entry level training
- perceived to have industrial ramifications
- not “worth the hassle”
- not relevant to the majority of occupational functions and tasks of staff.

8. Use of National Local Government Training Packages

Respondents were asked if their Councils used or intended to use the National Local Government Training Packages for Local Government Training.

- Across the **Sector** just over 50% indicated that they **would not use** the Packages
- Only **1 metropolitan** Council and **2 country** Councils indicated they were **currently using** the Packages
- **11 country** Councils and **6 metropolitan** Councils indicated that there was an **intention to use** the Packages.

Again it must be stated that the Survey did not provide an opportunity for respondents to clarify the “no” rating given to the use of the National Training Packages. However, the slightly higher rate of “intention to use” together with the fact that the Training Packages are only in the very early stages of implementation, suggests that there may be a greater interest from the Sector when these Training Packages are more widely introduced to the Sector.

9. Preferences for Days and times for Council Members and Staff to be involved in training activities

9.1 **Council Member** preference on a **Sector** basis were Tuesday, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Weekends. However, there was a slightly higher preference from **country** Councils for Wednesday and Thursdays and a significantly higher acceptance of weekend training activities than their metropolitan counterparts.

In terms of preferred times, on a **Sector** basis evenings rated highest, followed by full days and afternoon sessions. Morning sessions were not popular. **Metropolitan** respondents indicated a strong preference for afternoon and evening sessions where as **country** respondents indicated an equal preference for full days or evening sessions.

9.2 **Council Staff**, on a **Sector** basis, preferred Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and this correlated with both country and metropolitan preferences. There was little support for weekend activities within any grouping.

On a **Sector** basis full days were by far the highest-ranking preference which was also supported by country and metropolitan respondents. There was little support for evening activities within any grouping.

10. Factors that make it difficult for staff and Council Members to participate.

Country Councils equally weighted the top three difficulties as:

- Geographical locations
- Travel time
- Current workloads

Metropolitan Council’s highest ranking difficulty was current workloads.

Sector wide more than 50% of respondents indicated that:

- Current offerings not meeting and/or matching training and education needs
- Cost of Activities (particularly country respondents)

were major factors which impacted on the participation rates of staff and Council Members.

11. Other Comments to assist the LGA to determine how it can best meet the training and education needs of staff and Council Members.

The final question in the Survey invited general comments on how the LGA could best service the Sector in relation to training and education. Of the 44 responses received 38 took the trouble to offer the following comments:

- As training & Development is an overwhelming area I believe that the LGA should remain focussed in what it provides
- Don't try to be/do all for everyone
- Metro & rural Councils do have aligned needs all though there are some variances that should be kept in mind when deciding on final services to provide
- Believe that Councils need to establish their own training needs. All we require is reference to quality trainers.
- We are doing well in house. The LGA should not become too deeply involved. Provide support & some relevant industry wide opportunities
- Training should be flexible to meet individual needs of Councils
- Training should be transportable so it can occur at Council if need be
- If LGA is to provide training & education they need to become more professional & offer courses/services similar to TAFE and universities
- LGA should facilitate activities and leave the industry and private providers to implement
- This survey should have been supplied between EM's & staff. The EM training should be arranged & conducted by the LGA using consultants.
- Staff training should be provided by learning institutions or via private providers or in- house
- Important that needs of country Councils re travel time required are considered & balanced against metro's needs
- Training staff especially managers should more often be with people from other industries external to Council
- A comprehensive understanding of the LG training requirements need to be obtained to provide a coordinated approach, to provide necessary training that is focussed specifically on LG Topics
- I don't believe LGA should be duplicating services provided by outside providers
- Training needs to be specific to LG and not provided by the training /education industry e.g. GI Training
- Look at gaps in the marketplace and focus on these e.g. training for general inspectors, Health inspectors.
- Don't try to get too involved in issues where there are many other providers' e.g. negotiation skills, project mgt etc.
- Issues are different for city and rural Councils
- The staff/ EM issues are also very different
- City Councils have many training providers to choose from so only need LGTA to provide industry specific problems
- They should broker other programs i.e. management course
- They could act as a reference point advising Councils of all options

- Commendable start in finding out what the base industry thoughts/needs are
- Industry actual training needs analysis required e.g. Council training plans - LGA.
- Learn from LGTA mistakes
- Must be consideration given to rural Councils and costs/time involved in travelling to Adelaide to attend training.
- LGA has a lot of good training but it sometimes goes for only 2-3 hours. These could be provided to country Councils via video conferencing/internet.
- Could LGA access funding to set up in Council offices
- LGA approach with GST was good. Get the right firm to do the seminars.
- Don't try to be all things to all Councils.
- Have a small flexible approach e.g. have time to learn theory before specific training on the issue.
- Training programs must be organised in regions to attract more participation from regional Councils
- Important to stick to LG topics, as training providers all over can provide other topics
- Consider regional training. Perhaps at slightly increased cost to make training more accessible to a wider range of staff/consider video conference sessions
- This is a problem for elected & staff
- LGA has important role as facilitator rather than provider
- Often useful sessions are too small & not tied in with other offerings to warrant attraction by rural Councils
- Now greater emphasis in on-site training rather than travelling to courses. This needs support services

SECTION 2 – RESULTS OF CONSULTATIONS

2.1. Interstate and National Bodies

Contact with Local Government Associations and/or like organisations in all States and the Northern Territory was made to determine the coordination and management structures used to facilitate training and education for Local Government Members and staff in their State/Territory:

Of the seven invited to participate in a telephone interview, representatives from the following four organisations gave willingly of their time and expertise:

- Local Government Association – Northern Territory (LGANT)
- Western Australian Municipal Association – WA (WAMA)
- Australian Local Government Training – Victoria (ALGT)
- Local Government Shires Association-Learning – (NSW-LGSA Learning)

Methodology

Associations were sent a letter of invitation to assist through the conduct of telephone interviews using a prepared list of questions (*Refer Attachment 2/2.1*). Further follow-up via e-mail correspondence and telephone calls to arrange convenient times for these interviews to take place secured a commitment from the 4 organisations named above.

The following summary reflects common arrangements, policies, practices and/or modes of operation within the framework of the questions posed. Where there was significant differentiation, the *source has been noted at the end of the comment eg. (WA)*.

Consultation with the ALGT has been dealt with separately at the end of this summary due, in the main, to the different emphasis of its role and mode of operation to the LGA Associations contacted.

- **Management and coordination structures used to ensure the training and education needs are met.**

Representatives indicated that:

- Although the function may operate under a different name, the training and education area was a service function of the respective Associations. This was seen as a major strength and a primary relationship, which enabled them to work closely with the Sector and complement wider Sector issues with appropriate training and education support.
- primary role was one of facilitation eg. the meeting of training needs identified through a range of services, some provided directly through the Associations others out-sourced to credible external providers.
- development of appropriate learning resources and/or research and development was part of their brief. Products evolving from these areas were “owned” and marketed directly under own name.
- where training was provided by the training arm of the Association, this was usually Local Government specific, topical and directly related to issues confronting the Sector.

- Coordination, liaising, relationship building, collaborating and joint venturing (including co-badging and marketing) with relevant local and state government agencies, Professional Associations, Tertiary Institutions, TAFE and private providers was seen as feasible and indeed essential to avoid duplication of effort and confusion in the market place. Such approaches have been used successfully in the past, will continue and could be extended “across borders” between LGA’s.
 - Council Members, Senior Staff and Regional Councils are major markets for Local Government specific programs (*WAMA*)
 - All Staff and Council Members including Regional are major markets for Local Government specific programs (*NSW LGSA Learning*)
 - Economic rationalism is impacting on demand for courses eg less staff to do more work, therefore less time available for participation in training. Council Members participation variable due to interest and/or work priorities (*LGANT*)
- **Resourcing (Funding /Staffing)**
 - Funding
 - Operating 3/4 years respectively on a full cost recovery Business Unit basis. (*WAMA and NSW LGSA Learning*)
 - Department of Local Government supports with funding, monies also available from ATSIC, taps into funding for specific projects and some income from fees generated from training programs conducted (*LGANT*)
 - Staffing
 - Total of 4 (Manager, Development Consultant, Training Coordinator, one Administration Officer) (*NSW LGSA Learning*)
 - Total of 2 (Manager, one Administration Officer) (*WAMA*)
 - Executive Officer of LGANT responsible for training and education services as part of overall responsibilities, shared secretarial resource and topped up with project based officers dependent of project funding.
 - Other

Both NSW and W.A. have sourced specific “preferred providers” from training provider market, have “mutually beneficial arrangements” in place and/or “Ethical Code of Conduct” to resource public regular course offerings as well as specific Local Government training and education offerings.
- **Benefits & Drawbacks and other Models**
 - Relationships, joint ventures with other local government bodies as outlined above were seen as an essential component of a successful Model (*NSW-LGSA*)
 - There were significant benefits for the Associations to provide training and education services to its Members
 - Essential to ensure services offered in training and education were perceived as Local Government specific by the market place.

- Out-sourcing and the use of preferred private providers for both specialised and generic type programs and activities provided the greatest flexibility in meeting a diverse range of needs. *(NSW-LGSA/WAMA)*
 - Must be financially self supporting either as a business unit, not for profit and/or resourced through grants – cannot be seen to be diverting resources away from Association’s “core” business activities.
 - Alternative model could be to integrate with existing Industrial Relations/Employee Relations unit within the LGA. WAMA has recently decided to amalgamate these functions.
- **Influence of National Competency Standards and Training Packages**
 - Overall the National Competency Standards were not seen as having any real impact on training for the Sector. It was generally felt that while there may be some usefulness in relation to program/course design, the overall framework was unwieldy, could have implications for the various salary/award scales and not worth the effort.
 - The National Training Packages are relatively “untried” so few comments on these were made.
 - Formal and/or close links with ALGT differed between respondents and appeared to be mainly project based as were relationships with the respective ITAB’s.

- **Opportunities for closer working relationships and/or joint ventures with LGA-SA**

All representatives indicated there were opportunities to:

- Improve and get better value from a stronger network of LGA training and education units.
- Joint venture and/or collaborate on activities, events, programs, course materials/resources and research and development projects.

An offer to explore a “partnership” arrangement with SA was proposed by WAMA and could be worthy of further investigation.

Opportunities to collaborate, either as independent Units and/or through the ALGT into overseas markets, particularly the near Asian countries were raised.

- **Example of Services**

Both WAMA and NSW-LGSA-Learning have provided marketing material of the various activities and programs – Refer Section C.

- **Australian Local Government Training**

Operates as an industry training company working closely with the National Training Advisory Board and the network of State Public Administration Industry Training Boards (PAITABs).

Its role incorporates the development of materials, learning and assessment Guides for Local Government Traineeships and the National Training

Packages aligned to the National Competency Standards for Local Government.

Keen to strengthen its relationship with the LGA in South Australia as well as other States particularly with the “roll out” of the national training packages which the ALGT believe will be a major training and education resource to the Sector nationally.

2.2 Centre for Local Government Training

The Centre for Local Government Training ceased operations in April 2000. Five of the eight representatives from the Local Government Training Authority Board, which oversaw the operations of the Centre for Local Government Training, were interviewed by telephone including the Chairperson, AWU and ASU representatives, the LGA Regional representative and a Council Member representative (Regional).

Methodology

Prior to conducting the telephone interviews, Board Members were sent copies of the Industry Survey Questionnaire together with an outline of the questions that would be asked during the interview. (*Refer Attachment 2/2.2*)

Whilst strict adherence to the sequence of questions outlined was not necessarily followed, the natural course of each conversation addressed all of the issues on which feedback and comment were sought. As would be expected, each representative responded from their own experience and professional background. As a consequence, responses varied but there were some areas of commonality, particularly between regional interviewees. The following summary reflects both common points (distinguished by *) together with the more individual responses received.

Summary of Responses

Changes and Challenges likely to impact on education and training needs

- *Amalgamations have settled down but could be another round
- *Tendering of work and move by Councils to be competitive – knowledge and skills about the concepts and processes
- *New Act
- *Changes happening fast & furious – challenge is how to keep up and how to provide relevant training where and when it is needed
- National Competition Policy
- Transition of operational staff to more emphasis on managing others eg contractors.

Priority training and education needs of Council Members and Staff

Council Members (no prioritising implied in listing)

- Role and responsibility clarification – Mayor, Members, & CEO – Policy vs Operation
- Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest, Accountability
- Functioning as a Team
- Strategic Planning and skills in linking Plan to all aspects of organisation

- Information Technology and telecommunication skills eg. e-mail and Internet
- Policy Development – implications and applications
- Committee procedures
- Performance based budgeting
- New Member induction and support
- Environmental and community management

Staff (no prioritising implied in listing)

- *Consultation skills – development of instruments, implementation and evaluation of data, facilitating public meetings
- *Functioning as a team – within work groups and with Council Members
- Managing change and increasing work demands
- Planning – strategic and project
- Performance based budgeting
- *Specification, tenders and contract development, negotiation and management (outsourcing)
- Reading specifications and developing submissions including budgets (competing for work)
- *Development of human resource management training and practices and supporting the implementation of same
- *Information technology skills – white collar workers ok but blue collar workers have a real need
- Responsiveness and skills in managing customer and community interaction

LGA's role in assisting Councils to access training and education

- Needs to gear-up the training effort
- *Is in a better position to coordinate given its closeness to the Industry
- Ensure there is a better balance in meeting blue collar workers needs as well as administrative staff
- *If training is offered and/or organised by LGA, must be specialised towards Local Government and not generic – plenty of other providers doing the generic stuff.
- *If external providers used, need to ensure activities for Local Government staff are customised to Local Government needs.
- Ensure that current out-sourcing strategies do not erode the skills base of the industry eg short term gain could impact negatively on long term maintenance of skills and knowledge of staff
- Needs clever marketing to “sell” the “value” of training particularly to Regions and Council Members.
- Invest in technology deliver options – traditional methods not working.
- *Closer/better/extended liaison, coordination and joint ventures with other groups eg Regional Groups, TAFE, Professional Associations, PAITAB, Unions etc. – has been and likely to continue to be duplication of effort otherwise.
- Training options for regional Members and staff need to take into account different culture, resourcing, travel and time constraints.

- *Councils are good at identifying needs and making own arrangements but some smaller and regional ones will need assistance
- More creative and flexible approaches needed – shorter “modularised” options and in “normal” working time.

Methods of training delivery and/or services best suited to Councils

- *Combination of theory and on-the-job training
- *Work-place Assessment
- Workshops with follow-up
- *Use technology eg. On-line Learning, CD Rom, self-instruct packages, tele-conferencing, “chat room” tutorials
- Annual Conference with specific workshops

LGA’s role in encouraging greater participation

- *Better coordinate training effort of all groups involved in delivery of training
- *Out-sourcing delivery components to *credible* providers
- *Determine needs and arrange options to meet the needs eg brokerage, resources, contacts, recommendations
- LGA needs to “stick to its knitting” – policy development and facilitation ok but not appropriate to be involved in delivery of training and education
- Act as the “Umbrella” body for education and training in the Industry
- Maintain quality control role over content development and delivery to ensure what’s provided actually meets specific Local Government needs.
- Ensure portability, transfer and recognition of skills by encouraging accredited training in the Industry
- Encourage greater use of National Competency Standards and Training Packages particularly at entry level
- Encourage more and/or better use of the apprenticeships and traineeships
- Assist Industry to embrace and use the information technology age

Additional Comments & Observation

The Local Government market for training is, in reality, very small and getting smaller due to the increased capability of most Councils (excluding some of the small and/or regionally based ones) to meet own needs, using own in-house resources or from the highly competitive market of external training providers. Therefore the LGA needs to ensure it does not “re-invent the wheel” and only fills the gaps in the market place.

The LGA, in whatever role it takes on, must have the ability to scale up and down very quickly and should not “build” another LGTA type unit.

2.3 Professional Groups

Representatives from the following professional bodies operating within the Local Government sector were contacted:

- Institute of Municipal Management
- Australian Institute of Building Surveyors
- Confederation of Library Administrators

- Local Government Authorised Persons Association
- Local Government Records Management Group
- Royal Australian Planning Institute
- Institute of Municipal Engineers
- S.A. Institute of Rate Administrators

Methodology

It was first proposed to obtain the views of these representatives in a series of focus group workshops. Most were unable to attend these and it was decided to seek their input to this project via telephone interview.

The interview format was based on questions designed for the focus group discussion. It became apparent in early interviews the questions relating to challenges and changes occurring within the Local Government industry as a whole were outside the perceived roles of the professional associations. As might be expected the focus of respondents was more on the needs of their Members existing within their own professional sector rather than the industry as a whole.

Each of the professional associations has in their charter some responsibility for the education and training of their Members. Therefore, questioning during the majority of interviews explored how professional associations and a managing or coordinating structure for education and training within the LGA might better complement each other in terms of education and training initiatives.

Summary of Responses

Approach to Education and Training by Professional Associations

A variety of approaches are evident. These range from:

- the development of an annual Training Plan for Members based on formally identified to needs,
- events planned 3 - 6 months in advance based on Member feedback during meetings,
- ad hoc initiatives decided by Association Executive or Training Committees based on what is current, topical or urgent within the particular sector of the industry.

The frequency and format of training events for their Membership also varies significantly and include:

- annual State based or national conferences
- quarterly/monthly workshops specifically for training of Members which are linked to the Association's Training Plan and/or a more ad hoc approach as outlined above
- including a training segment as part of regular meetings
- coordinating or liaising with higher education institutions regarding formal qualifications e.g. TAFE (entry level) and Universities for graduate and post graduate studies

In terms of National Competency Standards there are varying degrees of awareness and commitment. Two Associations in sectors which have documented Standards consider either the ALGA or ITAB should be the driving force behind these. In one sector a national approach is not possible because of differing laws at State and Local Government levels. Another sector considers the whole issue too complex.

In all cases there does not appear to have been any formal liaison by Associations with the LGA concerning education and training, however the majority would welcome a closer working relationship. Needs within such a relationship differ however and these are explored further in the section concerning the role of a LGA managing and coordinating structure.

Education and Training Needs

While training and education needs differ according to industry sector and occupational specialisation there appears to be some needs common across sectors. These include:

- Management development, especially at middle management level
- Marketing skills at senior and middle management levels due to the greater commercialisation of Local Government service provision.
- Dealing with the media for senior and middle management (allied with marketing skills)
- Approaches to knowledge and information management with several respondents indicating that there appears to be few quality training providers in this area
- Managing/implementing change to work practices associated with information and telecommunications technology
- Keeping up with changes to legislation e.g. The Local Government Act, the Development Act, Environmental Protection Acts, and the Broadcasting Act.
- Front line/customer service programs again associated with the commercialisation of Local Government services.

Managing and Coordinating Structure

As indicated above, training and education needs are generally specific to individual professional sectors. It is appropriate that respective Associations provide the driving force to deliver education and training initiatives for their Members.

However, some Associations lack either the resources or expertise to accurately identify education and training priorities and to deliver a structured program of training and education. Clearly there may be a role for a LGA managing and coordinating structure to either provide this expertise or to facilitate access to these services.

Demand and expectations about what a managing and coordinating structure within LGA might provide vary with availability of resources or expertise within the professional association.

Views expressed are as follows:

- IMM - Don't need specific information because Members are senior executives employed in Councils, and LGA have representatives at meeting. Should probably have a formal agenda item so that LGA can provide updates and take information away about needs in the sector. Willing to co-badge, co-market with LGA in terms of training and education for senior management level.
- Better coordination as a training provider and/or information about best value programs.
- Assist Councils to develop training plans which are linked to Council strategic plans and coordinate training based on needs – act as a consultant and provide expertise to do this.
- Provide information about sources for programs, consultants and alternative delivery approaches e.g. on-line learning.
- Less emphasis on training delivery but be responsive if there are needs identified through formal planning.
- Use the LGA to promote and coordinate programs being offered by the association.
- Avoid trying to be all things to all people.
- Perhaps annual formal contact with LGA for planning purposes re training and education needs, then put a program in place based on those needs.

2.4 Regional Associations

Representatives from the following Regional Associations were interviewed on the telephone:

- Central Local Government Region
- Eyre Peninsula LGA
- Murray and Mallee LGA
- South East LGA
- Southern and Hills LGA
- Spencer Gulf Cities Association

Methodology

Prior to telephone interviews representatives were sent copies of the Survey Questionnaire together with an outline of the questions which would be asked during interview.

All representatives had seen the questionnaire and in one instance the questionnaire had also been tabled for discussion at a regional meeting.

Some difficulty was experienced in following the prepared interview question format, as not all representatives felt qualified to give their views on training and education issues. This was because either education and training was not their area of expertise or responsibility, and/or because it was considered more appropriate for individual Councils and their CEOs to respond.

As a result, rather than strict adherence to the interview questions, the interviewer tried to elicit from representatives:

- a general exploration of training and education priorities within the region
- preferences for access to training and education for Council Members and Council staff in the region
- the types of education and training services and information the region would like to receive under a new managing and coordinating structure.

Summary of Responses

A Regional Approach to Managing and Coordinating Education and Training

Representatives indicated that taking a regional approach to training and education is not always practical. This may be because of:

- **Cultural differences between Councils within a region.** Individual Councils operate differently, and the working relationships with the CEO and Council staff also differ. Also there seems to be significant cultural differences between merged and non-merged Councils in some regions.
- **Differing needs.** In addition to cultural differences, the needs of Councils, their Members and staff also tend to differ. Merged Councils have needs associated with changes due to their merged operations. Their larger size also means that it is more likely they will undertake in-house initiatives rather than support a regionally coordinated event.

The priority of issues such as economic management and sustainability of Council resources and services, environmental protection and natural resource management also tends to differ between Councils in the same region. While there are differing needs between Councils within regions, there is agreement by all regions that there will always be a reliance on the LGA to provide training and education on matters affecting the entire Local Government industry e.g. The Local Government Act, the Planning Act, implementation of GST. There is also indicated support at regional level for programs involving staff where there are ongoing needs e.g. Occupational Health and Safety, the use of technology, staff development etc.

- **Geographic spread.** Most Regional Associations try where possible to coordinate training events at times and locations convenient to their Members. However, this is not always possible and convenient for all. Factors working against regional events include time and costs associated with travel.
- **Resources.** Some of those acting as Secretaries or Executive Officers of Regional Associations indicated they do not have the expertise to provide a regional focus or develop an agenda for a regional approach to training and education. Also a factor is that some of these are in their roles on a part time basis.

Representatives by and large do seek and receive feedback about current and important training needs at regional meetings involving Chief

Executives of Councils in the region. Apart from this there would appear to be no formal process used to analyse training needs across a region to determine common needs and to develop a coordinated approach. From these meetings regional training events have been arranged, either with the assistance of the LGA or organised by the regional representative.

Regional representatives generally seem to accept they have a role to play in promoting education and training events arising from the LGA. There seems to be no indication of a formal process used by regions to determine training needs and plan relevant training and education programs.

Regional Education and Training Needs

While education and training needs differ between Councils within Regions, and between the Regions themselves, there are some needs common to all Regions. These include:

- An ongoing need to ensure all Council Members are trained. New Members need to be adequately inducted into their roles and in meeting procedures. Existing Members need to be kept current with industry and legislative changes. In Regions where Councils have merged, or are considering a merger, Council Members and staff need assistance with change processes. There is also common need for some Members to acquire training/assistance with the formulation of strategic plans for the Council.
- Natural and other resource management issues (associated with the review of the Development Act), land management.
- Development/up-skilling of planning and economic development staff.
- Management, particularly middle management, where there seems to be either scepticism or lack of awareness of the benefits of developmental type programs.
- Implementation and the use of information technology and telecommunications. This can range from the use of new software used in day to day Council operations to more sophisticated programs shared with State government departments e.g. geographical information systems, land use planning, management of infrastructure services such as water, electricity and gas. (The latter suggests closer coordination may be required with State Government bodies to ensure affected user groups or specialist staff in Local Government are not overlooked in roll out training of new technology applications.) The reliance on technology and the types of technology used by individual Councils does however differ, which means that in-house approaches to meet these needs are likely to be more viable.
- There appears to be a lack of awareness of and interest in National Competency Standards and Training Packages as a focus for education and training within Regions.

Managing or Coordinating Structure

General consensus seems to be a combination of continuing in-house management of education and training using external providers together with some centralised services provided by LGA.

Desired services to Regions from a managing/coordinating structure would appear to be:

- Maintain a core range of always in demand programs which ideally are also conducted in regional locations. It is suggested more thought needs to be given to scheduling of training events, either for Council Members or staff to encourage greater support. For example, past scheduling has not always allowed for busy periods (e.g. crop harvesting) in regions. Also some criticism about lack of adequate notice given for seminars and workshops. The quality of programs previously offered was also subject to criticism in terms of content either not being up to date, inaccurate content, (e.g. OHS) or content not relevant or tailored to Local Government operations (e.g. benchmarking, approaches to planning). Cost of programs is an issue with many Councils in addition to their location and timing.
- Greater coordination with Professional Associations and State Government departments re dissemination of information about their program offerings e.g. LGA to act as a post office for this type of information.
- Assisting Councils to source accredited Local Government external facilitators.
- Assisting local Councils in securing appropriate project management consultants to carry out research and development projects.
- Assisting Councils/Regions with training and education project management (perhaps recognising that larger Councils have more resources/expertise to be able to do this while smaller Councils struggle).
- Leave organising and coordinating conferences to Professional Associations unless there are themes specific to Local Government.

2.5 HR Network – Focus Group Discussion

Only three representatives from this networking group attended the focus group discussion. Representatives from two smaller Councils and one large merged Council attended. Given the small group it is possible outcomes of discussion are not truly representative of this network.

Methodology

The discussion followed the designed format.

Discussion Summary

Challenges and Changes Occurring Within the Local Government Industry

Participants were asked to rank the top 3 challenges or changes facing the industry for either Council Members or staff.

Indicated priorities ranging from most to least votes:

- New Local Government legislation – (highest priority and an ongoing need)
- The role and need for policy development in a Local Government setting (a higher priority for Council Members)
- The role of Councils as planning authorities (a higher priority for Council Members and an ongoing need for staff)

- Developing strategic management plans for Council (felt that there was not the capability in many Councils to do this.) In addition, associated needs related to driving down functional responsibility and the need for succession planning for staff were raised)
- Performance measurement and benchmarking (a perceived lack of general understanding in these areas, related issues with employee and industrial relations, performance appraisal)
- Consulting with communities and creating a public relations strategy for Council (represents both changes within Local Government sector to their operation and a challenge to do this effectively)
- Identifying community needs and preparing community development strategies
- Understanding and using information technology i.e. internet, software/hardware – administrative staff
- Understanding and exploring the concept of functional and financial reform
- Understanding the links between the Development Act and the Local Government Act i.e. strategic management planning
- Responding to environmental health management issues
- Forming partnerships with communities, private enterprise
- Future enterprise bargaining and workplace change strategies
- Service delivery strategies and options e.g. Competitive tendering
- Other – assistance with managing change for both Council Members and staff

LGA Focus for Facilitating Education and Training for the Industry

Providing Information

- Competency standards – more consistency needed with current standards, currently not taking into account differences between Councils i.e. larger merged Councils vs smaller Councils, too hard to work with at present.
- Access to information about facilitators, their credentials, provide quality assurance or accreditation.
- Provide a framework for professional recognition
- Provide a brokerage service for sourcing providers particularly for smaller Councils
- Greater encouragement/access for Professional Bodies to feed into LGA about their training and education needs

Providing Advisory Services

- When doing this take into account differences between Councils i.e. G6, smaller Councils, Regional Councils e.g. enterprise bargaining and industrial relations issues, appraisal systems, planning systems – one size does not fit all.
- Competencies, LGA relationship with ITAB – top down driven, more input to come/be sought from individual Councils, H/R group could provide this input.

- Related issues to brokerage service, particularly for smaller Councils who do not have the number of specialist H/R or training staff the G6 group have. They receive a lot of information about courses etc from private providers but no way of checking credentials of providers or quality of programs.

Training Services and/or Delivery

- Less emphasis on being a training provider but agreed there is probably a place for a range of core programs.
- Offer a brokerage service to Councils in terms of training services/providers.
- Provide a standard framework for Councils to undertake training needs analysis but capable of being tailored to size/scope of individual Councils.
- Availability of a database of information about courses, providers.
- Explore the possibility of Councils providing data re training needs to LGA so that programs based on broad based needs can be offered, but this is more likely to benefit smaller Councils. Perceived difficulty is that individual Councils use different systems and time frames to do their training needs and staff performance assessments.
- Offering training and education consultancy services but there are perceived difficulties in terms of affordability of these services.

Research and Development

Only general awareness within this group about the scheme, how it operates, access to funds etc. Considered more likely that this area is the domain of Chief Executives.

Access to and participation in education and training

Access/participation for staff generally didn't seem to be a major concern within this group. Their roles are to plan and implement training and apart from sourcing appropriate providers they indicated this aspect is under control.

Some feeling that participation rates could be enhanced with implementation of and/or better succession planning and performance appraisal systems.

Concern expressed that many Council Members are challenged by the changes occurring in the sector placing greater pressures on Council staff in terms of briefings and information provision. Also a feeling that some Council Members (both new and old) don't see the need for their own education and training.

National Training Agenda

Apart from the traineeship/new apprenticeship system, which were generally perceived to be working well, it was felt the national training agenda is too complex to work with. Different Council sizes/services, staffing structures and job roles within individual Councils are all relevant factors.

2.6 Local Government Research and Development Scheme

Direct consultation with the Executive Officer of the LGR&D Scheme was not seen as necessary following desk research on the Scheme's Annual Plan and Funding for Training Programs Application Policy Document.

From these documents there is clearly a commitment by the Scheme to consider funding for the development of innovative training and education projects whether they be methodologies and/or training delivery within the Guidelines articulated in the Application for Funding Training Programs. The Policy appears to give a strong weighting to applications that have a Sector wide benefit, however submissions from individual Councils are also actively encouraged where the new initiative proposes to increase the quality, improve access or reduce the cost to Councils of training and development activities.

The Sector, predominantly through the LGA, has already benefited from projects funded through the LGR&D Scheme. These appear to have had a direct positive impact on the education and training needs of the Sector although the uptake, usage and knowledge of the resources made available through this mechanism is difficult to quantify.

The LGR& D Scheme's Annual Plan identifies a range of Project Opportunities which, if implemented will likely provide further assistance to the Sector in addressing its education and training priorities, many of which were identified in this Review by respondents as "high priorities" There is also a correlation between the types of Projects that have been completed and/or are in progress and the changes and challenges perceived by respondents as likely to have an impact on the Sector in the future. Therefore it could be extrapolated that this "matching" validates the funding decision making processes of the Scheme in terms of addressing current and future education and training needs of the Sector.

2.7 Public Administration Industry Training Advisory Board (PAITAB)

The PAITAB operates on a grant from the Department of Education Training & Employment and is part of the national network of Industry Training Boards. Its primary role is to facilitate, on a Sector wide basis, the Government's Training Reform Agenda and to provide advice to Government on the training needs and priorities of all layers of Government eg. Local, State and Commonwealth as well as the Emergency Service and Police Sectors. Its structure suggests it has formal links with the National Training Advisory Board and ALGT.

Telephone consultations with the Acting Executive Officer of the PAITAB and the Local Government Representative on the Board were aimed at determining the current state of relationships with this organisation and the Local Government Sector. In addition, the consultations attempted to clarify any future/further potential that could be advantageous to assisting the Local Government Sector in addressing its training and education needs.

Summary of findings

PAITAB Acting Executive Officer, whilst acknowledging that there had been some criticisms of the PAITAB's relevance and value to the Local Government Sector, was very keen to develop stronger and more effective relationships. He indicated that it had, in the past, been difficult to determine the training needs of the Local Government Industry and expressed support for the LGA having a greater role in assisting the PAITAB in this area. He believed this would then allow the PAITAB to work more effectively with the Sector particularly in relation to the implementation of the National Training Packages and embedding accredited training in the Sector.

It should be noted that during the consultations with the LGTA Board representatives, several expressed a similar view in respect to the need for the LGA to strengthen its relationship with the PAITAB to maximise any benefits to the Sector that were available through the "formal" ITAB Network.

Local Government Representative on the PAITAB indicated that she found it difficult, since her appointment as a representative to the PAITAB some three months ago, to identify any tangible benefits for the Sector to be part of the PAITAB. She believed that there was little to gain from the complex structure of Government networks through which the PAITAB operated and considered that these were very removed from the "grass roots" requirements of the Sector. It was her view that any products and/or services eg. National Training Packages, accredited training activities and advice to Government on the training and education priorities of the Local Government Industry could be accessed more directly through other agencies and providers than through the PAITAB.

The above perspective appears to confirm the views of a high percentage of respondents to the various questions posed through out the Review process, both at a local and interstate level, relating to the perceived relevance of the national training framework and agenda for the Local Government Sector.

2.8 Office of the Commissioner of Public Employment

Although not identified as a required contact at the commencement of this Review, contact with this agency has been identified as potentially useful to the Review particularly in relation to the South Australian Public Sector Management Course.

The time-frame for the presentation of this Interim Report has not allowed for contact to be made. However, consultation will be arranged and a summary of the findings will be included in the Final Report.

SECTION 3 – ISSUES & OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

The information collected through the Review processes together with the detailed analysis of same contained in this Interim Report, seeks to provide an on-going “map” for determining the role, responsibility and structure the LGA may wish to adopt in managing and coordinating the education and training requirements for the Sector.

The desk research conducted as part of the Review process reveals that much of the new data collected “echoes” past issues that have been raised as well as identifying new issues that have resulted from major changes in the Sector over the past 5 years.

For example, the Local Government Organisation & Training Needs Analysis commissioned by the LGTA in September 1994 emphasises a number of similar needs/issues as this Review. This suggests that although there has obviously been some progress in these areas 6 years later some of these continue to be of concern to the Sector. ie the need for the Sector to:

- adopt more flexible approaches to training and education delivery through technology, a range of multi media packages, formal on-job training and work place assessment
- recognise and develop strategies to assist Regional Councils to access and participate in education and training activities at a level commensurate with their specific needs and Council Members and staff in metropolitan locations
- provide career progression opportunities through participation in accredited education and training activities which lead to recognised industry qualifications
- continually address the current and evolving priority training needs of Council Members and staff in areas such as:
 - Occupational Health & Safety
 - Community and Customer Relations
 - Information Technology
 - Understanding the Work Context, eg. strategic positioning and goals of Council, Policies, Legislative responsibilities, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders etc.
 - Strategic Planning
 - Management Skills – financial, human and assets
 - Workplace Reform
 - Provision of Leadership
 - Performance Management and Measurement
 - Implementation of Change
 - Waste Management
 - Construction & Maintenance skills update and enhancement

Similar perspectives about the changes and challenges facing Local Government and the inherent implications on human resource management/development expressed in this Review's findings are to be found in the LGTA Organisational Review Document finalised in February 1998 (Page 6) Perhaps the major difference between 1998 and the Year 2000 is that the projected key changes are now Council's reality.

It is important therefore, to place the issues outlined in this Section of the Report and any resultant decisions as to "the best way" to address same within a whole of Sector strategic framework and context

The pace of change within Local Government and the increasing expectations and demands on Council Members and staff to "keep up" could lead to the temptation of seeking operational responses that "fix the problem" in the short term. However, this does little provide the necessary foundation to encourage the Sector and its individual Councils to recognise that a consistent long term investment and commitment is required to ensure the Sector has the multi-skilled, flexible and competent human resource base it needs for the future.

3.1 Issues for consideration

Market size and impact on commercial viability

Market size of the Sector is relatively small, and, it could be argued, is a reducing market given amalgamations, different service delivery strategies being employed and the indications from respondents involved in the Review that current work loads are a barrier to participating in training and education.

In addition a significant proportion of potential clients are located in regional areas with limited resources and are expensive to service with education and training. The small market size and therefore the viability of servicing same is further exacerbated by the capacity of the major metropolitan Councils being able to and preferring to manage their own education and training arrangements.

This not only provides a dilemma for the LGA should it choose to provide education and training services but also has ramifications for attracting suitable commercial private providers through an out-sourcing model.

Diversity of Service Requirements

The diversity of potential customer groupings coupled with the range of required education and training services and/or expectations the Sector has identified offers the LGA a major challenge in determining what should/could be its "core" education and training functions and responsibilities.

Whilst there are a number of opportunities to "delegate/out-source", through a variety of arrangements, the various service requirements to public/private providers, Professional Associations, Unions, Regional Associations. It can be reasonably predicted the Sector will still hold the LGA responsible for the full range of "quality control" aspects of service provision.

If not adequately managed this will put the LGA's efforts in the area of education and training provision under scrutiny and could also have a detrimental effect on the LGA's primary core Member services.

Coupled with this is the potential for the LGA to become the "provider" of the least financially viable and/or high cost services.

It is therefore critical for the LGA to determine:

- Which education and training services it can and should provide with the appropriate "mix" of not for profit and profitable services
- Strategies which will maintain the quality control of services "delegated/out-sourced" to other agencies and "add value" to the LGA's image, reputation and integrity.

Structure & Reporting

The LGA will need to address its preferences and explore the advantages and disadvantages from both its own internal operational perspective and the wider Sector perception as to what structure and reporting arrangements it may want to put in place to accommodate an education and training service. For example, does the LGA want to:

- establish a Sector Advisory Panel/Board as part of its structure?
- establish the new service within an existing structure eg. IR Unit?
- conduct the new service on a profit making basis, a cost recovery basis, a subsidised basis?
- involve the State Executive in advisory, policy and/or operational decision making of the new service?
- what reporting line(s) will be required?
- how will the new service's performance be measured/evaluated? By the LGA? By the Sector?

In responding to these and other questions related to structure, the LGA needs to be mindful of the message sent by a high proportion of responses received indicating the LGA should not "build" another LGTA.

Relationship Building

From the Review findings there is clearly a need for a more coordinated approach to bringing together all the groups within the Sector who have an interest in and/or educational and training products and services to offer the Sector. The "ad-hoc" nature of current arrangements appears to confuse the users of these services, increases the potential for duplication of effort and does nothing to enhance the synergies and capabilities that could be gained from formalising relationships and collaborative arrangements with key groups so that a broader and better range of services could be offered to the Sector.

Such relationship building would be perceived by the Sector as an important strategy given the past criticism of the LGTA for not doing so and the comments made by a number of Review respondents that the "LGA should not try to be all things to all people".

If the LGA wants to be seen to be facilitating this process it needs to address how and with whom it may wish to “partner” and prioritize its “partner” targets. This should include consideration of relationships with Interstate Associations.

Staffing Implications

Although a preferred model of operation for the new service is yet to be decided, it is important to consider the links between what model the LGA does adopt and the skill base that will be required of the personnel involved to give it the best chance of success. For example, there is clearly a difference between a management and a coordination role. Conversely there is also a difference between a profit making “business” unit and a cost recovery and/or subsidised model of operation. Each require a different and/or complimentary skill base.

The capacity for the new service to be flexible enough in its staffing arrangements to “gear up and down” depending on demand but without negatively impacting on the consistency of a quality range of services also needs consideration.

Financial Implications

The Review brief did not require the consultants to identify strategies for financially resourcing the LGA’s involvement in this new initiative. However, the structural model chosen, the selection of “core” products and services and the staffing arrangements that are decided will naturally start to set the parameters for the LGA’s investment.

Other issues that may also warrant some exploration are:

- Should/could the LGA raise a “levy” or propose a “training Member fee”? eg. Construction Industry Training Board Model or LGTA “Member” Model.
- Should/could the LGA increase its current Membership Rate to cover the costs of providing the new training and education services?
- Assuming the LGA operates on a “fee for service” basis, will any consideration be given to subsidising Regional and/or small Councils?
- Is it possible to renegotiate the TER funding to provide a “base” grant to ensure appropriate training and education services as identified by the Sector are provided?
- What investment, in \$ terms and for what period of time, is the LGA prepared to allocate to the “start – up” phase of the new service? (*It could be up to 2 years before such a new service starts to show any return regardless of its structure.*)

Marketing & Promotion

Consultations with WAMA and LGSA-Learning confirmed that the manner in which they market and promote their education and training services and products has been an essential ingredient in their success.

The establishment of a “niche” market profile for the LGA as the “specialist” Sector training and education provider (even though the actual delivery maybe done by other providers) would be in line with the Review’s findings that the LGA should focus on what other providers are not doing eg. specialist Local Government.

To support this “specialist” market position, would the LGA want to:

- become a Registered Training Provider in its own right?
- work towards offering accredited training and education activities?
- require that other providers working with the LGA have their programs accredited?
- formally joint venture under a co-badging arrangement with other “specialist” Sector training providers, at a local and national level, to bring high profile Local Government speakers/experts to South Australia?

Implementation

The Review has identified a diverse range of needs, expectations and clarification as to what the Sector believes the LGA should and should not do. This is particularly clear in the responses received to Question 5 of the Survey.

It is apparent that the implementation of some will be easier and less costly than others, that some having a higher consensus across the Sector as “should dos” than others and that strategically and operationally, the Sector, particularly Regional and small Councils, require assistance to maintain and build on their training and education effort for both Council Members and staff.

The LGA appears to have already established itself as a responsive and relevant Member organisation in a variety of service areas including some aspects of training and education.

However, the length of response time and the perceived appropriateness of how the LGA addresses and/or sets priorities on the areas of need raised through the Review may well be seen by the Sector as an indicator of how effectively the LGA will be in managing and the coordinating the overall education and training needs of the Sector in the future. This in turn may impact positively or negatively on Councils future commitment to support the education and training services organised by the LGA.

Therefore it is probably important for the LGA to give consideration as to how and when it will implement its training and education strategies and, most importantly, how this will be communicated to the Sector.

3.2 Options for consideration

It is expected that the planned Workshop for which this Interim Report provides a foundation will explore and determine a viable model for the LGA to meet the management and coordination requirements for the education and training needs of the Sector, be these services or products.

To facilitate this the following options for consideration are offered, not as discrete models in their own right but as “food for thought”.

- Outsource “generic” programs to public/private specialist providers on a “preferred provider status” with co-badging and appropriate financial incentives to both parties. Areas such as Information Technology, Management, Front line staff training and some areas of Occupational Health and Safety would readily fit. These should be offered as Public and/or In-house programs with preferred providers being prepared to service Regional areas.
- Establish an “Education and Training Information Service Bureau “ and Help Desk, within the LGA Net. Access to Providers and Consultants including profiles and where possible testimonials from satisfied Local Government users, Programs, Courses, Resources, Publications, Learning/Training Packaged material including electronic and on-line self paced programs, National Competency Standards and Training Packages, career pathways etc. could be provided. Capacity to monitor “hits” and “hot linking” directly to the listed resource agency could be incorporated. This could also be out-sourced once established but managed from within the LGA.
- Establish the LGA as the Sector “specialist” as per the WAMA and LGSA-Learning Models. eg
 - retain and further develop current role in Sector specific provision of Local Government training and education – topical seminars, workshops, courses in areas that can not accessed elsewhere in conjunction with Interstate, Professional Associations and Unions
 - be the provider for all Council Member professional development, training and education
 - build relationships and exploit mutually advantageous training and education activities with priority “partners” in areas of research and development as well as training provision
 - continue to advance research and development projects on behalf of the Sector in identified areas of high need and future education and training innovations through the Local Government Research & Development Scheme
- Explore the advantages and disadvantages of establishing a model that incorporates education and training with the existing IR Unit and provides the new services within the same framework and mode of operation.
- In consultation with the Regional Associations explore and determine strategies to strengthen their role, resource and expertise base with the view to increasing their capacity to meet Regional education and training needs at the local level.