

A high-angle photograph of a group of people sitting around a large wooden table in a meeting. There are five people visible: a man in a white shirt and glasses leaning over the table, a woman in a black vest, a woman with curly hair and glasses, a man in a yellow shirt, and a woman in a white shirt. They are interacting with laptops, tablets, and notebooks on the table. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor office or meeting space.

**VLGA**

Victorian  
Local Governance  
Association

# Councillor Readiness Program 2024



# Setting Victoria's Councillors up for Success

The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) is the peak body for Victorian councillors and Victoria's councillor support network.

We are an independent, apolitical, membership-based organisation that supports councils and councillors in good governance. We provide practical support, training and policy guidance to councils and inspire and enable good governance in elected representatives, nurturing their journey from candidacy to end-of-term.

The VLGA is the only organisation with a singular focus on supporting councillors and those who work with them and we have worked to support councils in good governance for the past three decades.

We are pleased to offer this Councillor Readiness Program for 2024.

## Mandatory Councillor Induction Requirements

It is a requirement under the Local Government Act 2020 that all councillors complete a councillor induction program that satisfies the obligations set out in the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020 within a period of four months of swearing in.

## The Councillor Readiness Program

The VLGA's Councillor Readiness Program comprises the signature module *"Building an Effective Councillor Team"*, as well as four specific governance modules.

These modules are aligned to the statutory obligations outlined in the Local Government Victoria publication *Guidance on the mandatory training for Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors - October 2024*.\*

The program equips councillors with the skills and information they need to set them up for success. This, coupled with a program of ongoing professional development, ensures councillors are armed with the skills they need to deliver good governance throughout their four-year term.

*\* to complete the mandatory requirements, councils will also need to provide councillors with the demographic makeup of the municipality, and the internal process for dealing with customer requests. The VLGA can provide a session outline on this obligation if required.*

## Program Delivery

The VLGA invites councils to partner with us to deliver councillor induction that is tailored and scalable to your needs. Each module set out in this prospectus will be delivered by our expert team and program partners.



The VLGA acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

We pay our respects to the Traditional Owners, their elders past, present and future, and to their cultures.



# Benefits of VLGA Training

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The VLGA provides relevant, accessible, and comprehensive governance and ethics training on the business of local government and the journey for elected representatives.

## **Consistency**

All VLGA training is developed based on our in-depth knowledge of council operations and community interactions. We offer consistency and relevance in our training as the scope and type of services offered by councils are similar despite differences in council size and demographics.

## **Authority**

All VLGA trainers have experience within local government, either as elected councillors or as council staff members. We have a thorough understanding of the legislative framework under which councils operate in Victoria.

## **Quality**

The VLGA is in regular contact with key government departments, agencies, and Ministers. We are up to date with current issues facing councils and their communities and continually seek feedback on issues facing the sector

## **Members Exclusive - the VLGA Induction Guarantee**

Unique to the VLGA induction program is our guarantee that all enrolled councillors will be delivered an induction program that meets the statutory obligations of the Local Government Act 2020.

The VLGA will keep attendance records at all sessions, and provide a report to the Chief Executive Officer attesting to the completion of the mandatory elements of the councillor induction training by each councillor.

Any VLGA member councillor who, for whatever reason, is unable to attend scheduled induction sessions, will be offered the opportunity to attend special 'catch up' sessions delivered by the VLGA, both online and in person at our offices. These sessions will be designed to satisfy the mandatory induction requirements.





# Mandatory Team Training

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## Building an Effective Councillor Team

### Time: 4 hours

This session will include activities to build relationships, connection and trust between councillors to support working as a cohesive group.

The session will establish the ground rules for councillors to work together as a councillor group, and an agreement and mechanism to hold each other to account.

By the end of this session, participants will have:

- an understanding of what's unique about the councillor team compared to other teams and boards
- clarity about the different roles of those within the group
- learned how to be a proactive force and create a positive culture workspace
- learned about the stages of councillor team formation and maintenance
- an agreed plan to put in place the key elements of a high performing councillor team
- an understanding of the elements of a dysfunctional team and how to recognise them
- an agreement on shared team values, behaviours and vision
- agreed on a collective approach to communicating decisions with the community while preserving the voice of individual councillors
- a collective understanding of the need to deal with disagreements quickly and productively, and a plan in place to do so

*For greatest impact, we recommend that this session be delivered in person. Many councils find this session is beneficial if delivered as a part of a retreat or other focussed setting.*

*The session can be delivered virtually if required.*

*“The VLGA is a peak body that is professional, respectful, and collegiate. I would recommend any governance leader to participate in their training and professional development programs.”*





# Mandatory Governance Training Modules

## Local Government Fundamentals

### Time: 3 hours

This session will lay out the fundamentals of local government, explaining the origins of local governments, how they are funded and the extent of powers available to councils and how they can be exercised.

The session will focus on the different roles of mayors, deputy mayors, councillors and the CEO and other council staff, and the legislative and practical day to day obligations of each. Focus will also be given to the relationship between councillors and council staff, including a look at the formal protocols in place.

The session will emphasise the role of councils in providing strategic direction to the organisation, and outline the pitfalls of seeking to delve into operational issues.

By the end of this session, participants will be able to demonstrate and understand:

- the origins of local government
- how councils are funded
- the role of mayor, deputy mayor and councillors
- the role of the CEO and council staff
- the powers of councils and of councillors
- understanding the strategic role of the elected council
- key legislative obligations
- the role of council in land use planning
- the relationship and interaction protocols between staff and councillors

*“I came away having learnt a few extra things and I was a former longtime Councillor and Mayor.”*





# Councillor Conduct, Integrity and Behaviour

## Time: 3 hours

This session will focus on the behavioural expectations of councillors, with a focus on the application of the Model Code of Conduct and the standards of conduct. For returning councillors, the session will outline the changed expectations arising from recent legislative changes.

The session will provide examples of acceptable and unacceptable conduct, illustrated by real-life case studies of what happens when things go wrong.

It will work through a range of practical compliance obligations that councillors have, including health and safety obligations, personal interests returns, conflicts of interest, the treatment of confidential and other information and compliance with council's own governance policies.

By the end of this session, participants will be able to demonstrate and understand:

- the Model Councillor Code of Conduct and standards of conduct
- misconduct, serious misconduct and gross misconduct
- improper conduct
- councillor conduct and social media
- what to do when things go wrong, including:
  - conflict resolution processes
  - internal resolution procedures
  - reporting breaches of integrity
- occupational health and safety
- personal interests returns
- the management and declaration of conflicts of interest
- managing confidential information
- council policies for expenses, gifts and donations

# Effective Decision-making

## Time: 3 hours

This session will explore exactly how decisions are made by councils, and further examine the role of individual councillors and the council as a whole. The session will look at the difference between council meetings, different committee types and councillor briefings and informal meetings. The session will also unpack the legal provisions councillors should be aware of.

By the end of this session, participants will be able to demonstrate and understand:

- the power of councils to make decisions
- the overarching governance principles and supporting principles
- how councils make decisions (resolutions, delegations and authorisations)
- how officers provide advice to councils
- council meeting fundamentals
- delegated committees and advisory committees
- councillor briefings
- conflicts of interest
- procedural fairness and reasonable apprehension of bias
- confidentiality and public transparency

Councils may like to accompany the delivery of this module with a 'mock' council meeting, delivered by their own governance team. The VLGA can assist in providing a framework for this meeting, as well as some example scenarios which can be interpreted according to the governance rules of your council.







# Financial Literacy for Councillors

**Time: 3 hours**

This session will provide an overview of council's Strategic Planning Framework, including the role of the Community Vision, Council Plan, financial plans and annual budget.

The session will explain how budgets work, how to read quarterly financial reports, the role of the audit and risk committee etc.

By the end of this session, participants will understand:

- The challenge of long term financial sustainability
- the strategic planning framework for councils
- how rates and charges work, including the rate cap
- the importance of the annual budget
- the difference between capital and operating expenditure
- how to read a quarterly finance report
- the questions to be asking management
- the role of the audit and risk committee



# Pricing

Our signature module **“Building an Effective Councillor Team”** is available to VLGA members only.

Pricing for the mandatory governance training modules reduces as more modules are taken up.

Mandatory team training	member pricing
Building an Effective Councillor Team	\$4,000

Mandatory governance training	member pricing	non member pricing
Any one module	\$3,000	\$6,000
Any two modules	\$5,000	\$10,000
Any three modules	\$7,000	\$14,000
All four modules	\$9,000	\$18,000

*All prices excl GST*

Training delivered in person may attract additional charges.

Discounts are available if partnering with another council for delivery of the mandatory governance training modules. Contact us for more information.

# Customised Programs

We understand that each municipality is different, with councillors at different stages of their councillor journey.

The VLGA Councillor Readiness Program is designed to not only meet the requirements for councillor induction under the Local Government Act 2020, but also be tailored and adapted to meet the ongoing professional development needs of councillors to be successful in their roles.

We can create training programs which cover the topics most important to your community, tailoring a program which best meet the needs of your councillors, ensuring they are best prepared for their councillor journey.

To find out more, contact our Learning & Development team.

# Booking your Training

To secure councillor readiness training for your council, please email our Learning and Development Lead, Kathy Vlahopoulos, at [kathy@vlga.org.au](mailto:kathy@vlga.org.au) or call VLGA on 9349 7999.

*“Delivery method was brilliant in story telling - I enjoyed the interaction and how the group was brought together along the journey.”*

# Membership

Not a member? Join today to secure your training discount.  
Contact our team at [vlga@vlga.org.au](mailto:vlga@vlga.org.au) to find out more.





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