



Councillor Competency Framework

Update

September 2006

Councillor Competency Framework Update has been prepared by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) for discussion with member councils, Local Government Victoria and the State Government on the role of a councillor and the competencies required to perform effectively in this role.

The MAV is the statutory peak body for local government in Victoria, representing all 79 municipalities.

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1. Executive Summary

The MAV has begun work on developing a new councillor training offering for 2007 in response to the gaps identified by the *Councillor Competency Framework* research. Activity underway includes updating existing courses, reintroducing advanced councillor courses already developed and sourcing off-the shelf courses from high quality external providers.

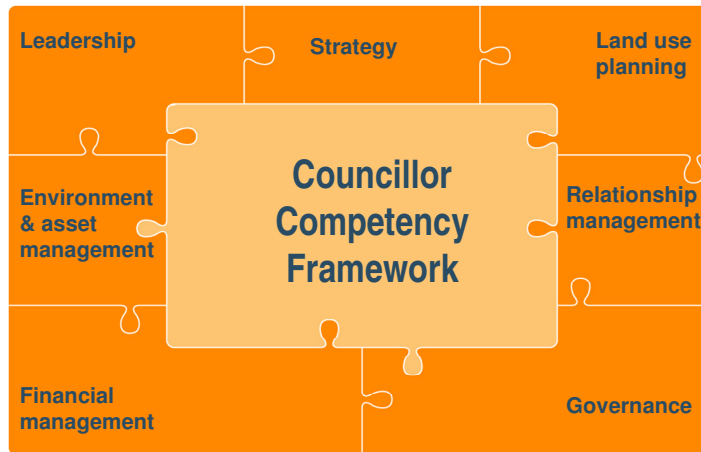
2. Background

In July 2006 the MAV released the results of its research into the competencies necessary to be an effective councillor in Victoria. The *Councillor Competency Framework* was part of an integrated research program designed to support good local governance and to provide a sound foundation for advocacy in this field. This other elements in this research program were:

- *Councillor Census 2006* - collating demographic and related data via a census to more fully understand the current cohort of councillors, their needs and attributes.
- *Managing Councillor Conduct* - conducting a review of the levers and mechanisms available and needed to support and manage councillor conduct.

A competency framework sets out the skills, knowledge and attributes required to undertake a role, and includes descriptions for each increasing level of effectiveness. The research identified seven competencies as outlined in the diagram below.

Diagram 1 - Councillor Competencies



Competencies are then defined in terms of observable behaviours at three levels:

- Competent - Performance consistently meets the expectations and requirements for the position and achieves planned outcomes.
- Commendable - Performance clearly exceeds job requirements, resulting in additional, measurable value, above the expectation of the community.
- Outstanding - Performance is of an exceptional level, exceeding job requirements and adding significant, measurable value, above the expectations of the community.

3. Competency Definitions

Leadership

Works cohesively with other stakeholders including councillors, community groups and the administration. Shows respect and develops trust through transparent actions, inclusive behaviour and strong communication skills. Acknowledges the diverse needs of all interested parties.

Strategy

Demonstrates a long-term strategic focus. Is inclusive of stakeholders' views in the decision-making process. Sets the goals and objectives for the council, with a balanced and long-term view. Understands the day-to-day implications of Council's strategy for the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the municipality.

Land use planning

Understands the purpose of land use planning for the municipality, and how it relates to both the council's strategic direction and the State's planning policies. Utilises the statutory framework effectively to review permit applications. Demonstrates an understanding of the alignment between land use planning and the strategic planning activities of the council.

Relationship Management

Engages with and is an advocate for the municipality, fellow councillors, council administration staff and other government representatives. Listens, understands and reflects competing views in the decision making process. Follows Council protocols and policies, including those for the media. Articulates the decisions made by the council to its constituents in a clear and understandable manner.

Environmental and asset management

Displays stewardship of council assets through strategic decision making on resource management. Ensures that appropriate resources are provided to ensure assets are maintained in a sustainable manner. In doing so ensures consideration for the built, social, cultural, economic and natural environments.

Financial Management

Deliberates on strategic resource plans and adopts budgets with a long-term perspective. Works with council staff to understand the financial position of the council.

Governance

Understands the legislative framework applicable to local government, in particular how to operate within the legal boundaries set out by the Act and other key legislation. Is well-informed on issues in order to make timely, effective, accountable and legal decisions that are transparent to the community.

4. Competency Importance

The MAV Councillor Census 2006 asked councillors to rank the importance of the competencies identified in the Councillor Competency Framework:

1. Leadership
2. Governance
3. Land Use Planning
4. Strategy
5. Relationship management
6. Financial management
7. Environment and asset management

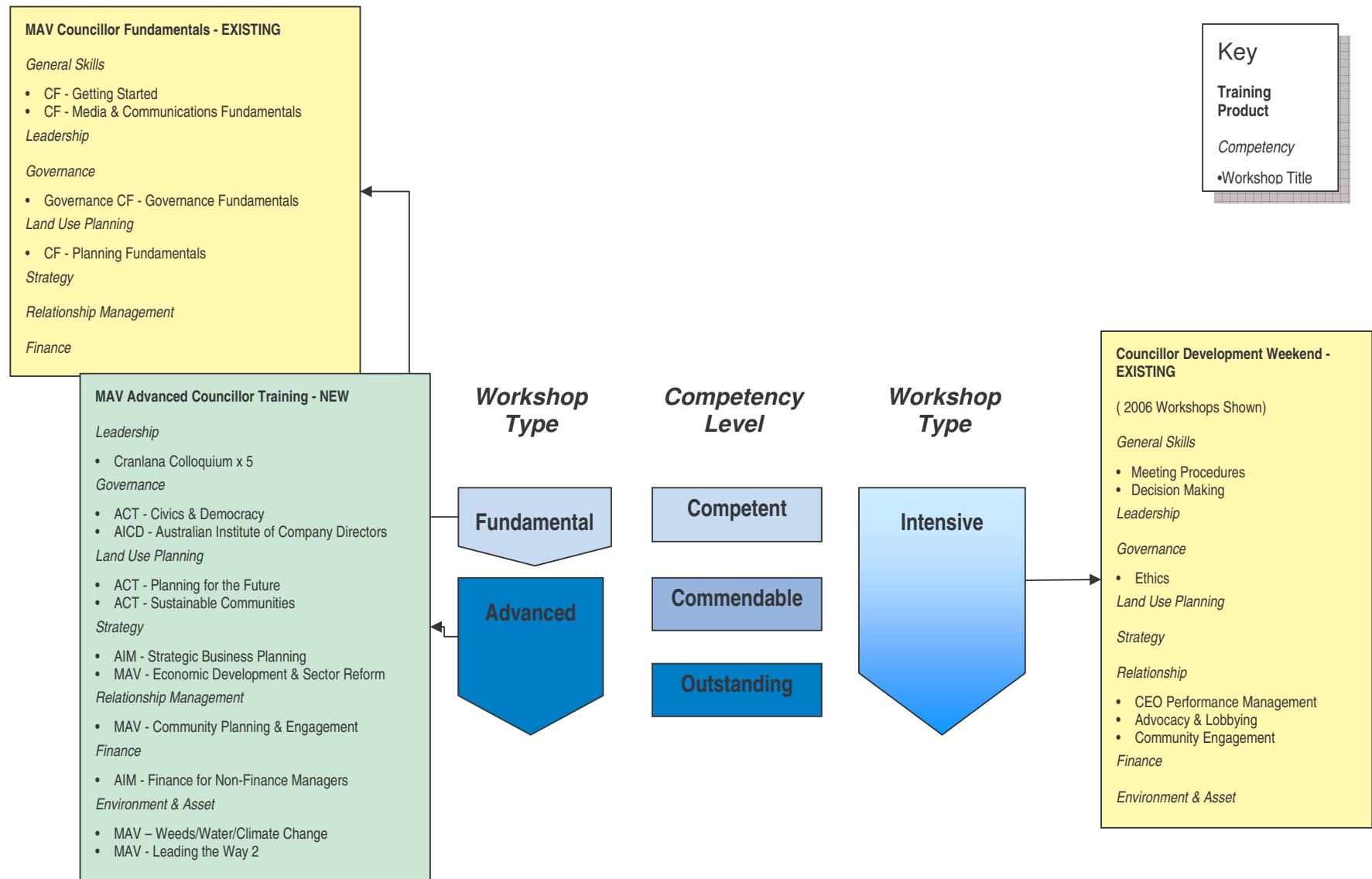
5. Changes to the Councillor Training Offering

The MAV considered a range of responses to the results of the Councillor Competency Framework research:

- *Development environment* – the environment in which councillor development takes place and possible futures;
- *Measurement & proof models* – the ways of measuring and proving that councillor development has taken place;
- *Development providers* – the participants and partnerships needed to provide councillor development;
- *Delivery Modes* – the councillor’s preferred training and development delivery modes;
- *Councillor Life Elected Cycle* – an analysis of councillor’s development needs at different times in their life cycle; and
- *Competency* – the current and planned MAV offerings that address each of the competencies identified in the MAV Councillor Competency Framework.

The result of this analysis is presented in the MAV Councillor Training Offering for 2007 below.

Diagram 2 - MAV Councillor Training Offering 2007



6. Conclusion

The work on enhancing the MAV councillor training offering for 2007 is well under way. The MAV will offer face-to-face training courses to councillors addressing fundamental and advanced levels of the seven competencies identified in the Councillor Competency Framework research. Courses will be offered based on existing course material and by sourcing off-the-shelf courses from quality external suppliers.