

19 January 2024

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Via email: [michael.mogridge@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:michael.mogridge@dpac.tas.gov.au)

Dear Mike

**Draft – Best-practice guide for recruitment and performance management of general managers**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the *Draft – Best-practice guide for recruitment and performance management of general managers*. This submission has been prepared by the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) on behalf of Tasmanian local government in collaboration with our members, all 29 councils.

LGAT is incorporated under the *Local Government Act 1993* and is the representative body and advocate for local government in Tasmania. Where a council has made a direct submission to this process, any omission of specific comments made by that council in this submission should not be viewed as lack of support by the LGAT for that specific issue.

Please contact Ben Morris at [ben.morris@lgat.tas.gov.au](mailto:ben.morris@lgat.tas.gov.au) or 6146 3743, if you have any questions or would like further information.

Yours sincerely



Dion Lester  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

## LGAT Submission: *Draft - Best-practice guide for recruitment and performance management of general managers*

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### Introduction

The Tasmanian local government sector welcomes the *Draft - Best-practice guide for recruitment and performance management of general managers* (the guide) and supporting materials. From time-to-time councils experience challenges in the recruitment and performance management of the General Manager (GM). Councils have told us that the guide is a useful document that will address many of these challenges, and in particular support the role of the mayor and councillors with this important function.

We note that some councils have designated their GM as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Our submission uses GM for consistency with the *Local Government Act 1993*. We also use the term 'councillors' that encompasses the roles of mayors, deputy mayors, councillors and alderman, except where the distinct role of the mayor is addressed.

### General Comments

We are encouraged that this guide is for 'best-practice', alongside the minimum requirements set in legislation, and templates, such as the LGAT's General Manager's Employment Contract. This approach provides a strong basis for ongoing review and continual improvement. The feedback we have received from councils reflects the challenges with best practice:

1. It is not possible to define a single 'best practice', as the situation and background varies. This is particularly the case for 29 councils, formed across many more communities. Prescribing a particular best practice limits adaption and innovation.
2. Best practice, at best, is a snapshot in time of a set of good practices. Practice needs to continually improve, bringing in contemporary workforce research and trends, rather than be stuck with what has been defined as 'best' at a point in time.

With those two points in mind, our overriding feedback is that the guide needs to:

- Detail the principles, objectives and good outcomes of good practice in recruitment and performance management for GMs. This helps councillors, who are unlikely to be human resources experts, to understand the 'why?' and provide a sound basis for innovation and adaption.
- Provide examples of good practice that councils can apply in their specific circumstances.

If the guide applies these two points it will provide a clear foundation for the mayor and councillors to meet legislative, good governance and community expectations, but also provide space for councils to adapt and innovate in the competitive executive market. The guide needs to support councils to attract, and then retain skilled and experienced executives.

## Specific Comments

The following table provides specific feedback on sections within the guide.

Section	Content	Comments / Concerns
Recruitment and selection: Requirements of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i>	The process for the recruitment of the general manager	<p>This is a generally good example of where the principles have been outlined to support how councillors undertake the recruitment process. Councils agree that these are reasonable. Adding a sub-heading would delineate good practice principles and objectives from requirements under the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i>.</p> <p>The process needs to account for the realities of executive recruitment. For example, moving faster to recruit a desirable candidate from the public or private sector, or targeted recruitment, such as ‘headhunting’.</p> <p>The consultant should also support council to articulate the milestones and other communication points expected of the mayor – inward and outward. This should form part of the recruitment plan.</p>

Recruitment and selection: consultant selection	Councils should engage an external consultant	<p>“appoint the consultant at a closed meeting”</p> <p>The previous section referred to “persons appropriately qualified in contemporary human resources practices and the recruitment of senior management personnel”. This term appears to include internal staff that can support the process, which may reduce the scope and costs of external expertise. The ‘why?’ an external resource should be engaged is important.</p>
	Scope of services	<p>The scope can be made more concise, as there is some repetition.</p> <p>The scope of the ‘matters’ must relate to the recruitment/performance management of the GM. This should not be read as an opportunity to raise other council management matters with the consultant.</p>
	“facilitating a workshop... and to consider any other matters of interest...”	<p>In the interests of transparency, it should be possible to record the decision in the meeting minutes, but protect confidential information in quotes.</p>

Recruitment and selection: the pre-interview stage	Training	<p>Guidance is needed here regarding ‘relevant’ training, perhaps reference to a section of the Learn2Lead website. It will be important that specific training is provided to support the guide and to walk through practicalities such as interviewing.</p> <p>The section includes training in relation to performance management when this section is related to recruitment. It may be appropriate to include a short section on supporting training.</p>
	The recruitment plan	The recruitment plan is an important part of the process, so requires more detail. What are the components that councillors should look for; why is it important; and how is the merit selection process applied.
	Mayor’s review and approval	Dot points can be condensed for conciseness.
Recruitment and selection: interview phase	Interview questions	This may be an appropriate avenue to explore cultural ‘fit’ and working relationships with mayors and councillors, or equivalents such as board directors/chairs.
	Tertiary qualifications	Verification can also be undertaken through online university tools, in addition to physical verification.

Recruitment and selection: selection panel report	Selection panel report	<p>An example selection panel report would be a useful resource.</p> <p>Conflicts of interest should also be included under Recruitment and selection: Requirements of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i>, as part of the process section. An explanation of why confidentiality is important, and that it is not at odds with good practice principles of an open and transparent process.</p>
Day-to-day oversight and liaison with the general manager	Day-to-day management	It should be made clearer that appropriate council staff may support the mayor in this management.
	Policies	Councils' policies for employees should also reasonably apply to the GM. Where specificity is required, a single policy for the GM, approved by the mayor, would be more appropriate. Unintended consequences may be created by involving other councillors and the public in setting GM policies, in what is essentially operational matters.
Performance management: managing the performance of the general manager	Frequency of review	Current good practice is for ongoing conversations around performance against pre-set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). This ensures that the GM's performance is aligned with expectations of the council and that where there are shortfalls these can be addressed in an open way.

Performance management: establishing the performance agreement	Principles	This is an important tool for mutual understanding of priorities and for performance and achievement by the GM. More explanation is needed around the 'why?' it is important and the principles and objectives that a good performance agreement seeks to do. This could then be supported by an example set of good KPIs sourced from current GMs' KPIs, deidentified.
	Key indicators	The examples range from the strategic to the very specific and if all were applied would lead to a very long 'shopping list' set of KPIs. This would make performance management challenging for the GM and councillors.
Performance management: performance review process	Process	In the interests of treating the GM "fairly, equitably" it would be appropriate to provide the GM with a right of reply to a draft performance review with the review panel. This would provide an opportunity for clarification prior to the review being finalised.

Remuneration	Link to LGAT model contract	Clarify that this relates to the LGAT model GM Contract, check for consistency throughout and note that other contracts may also be used.
	Remuneration package	<p>Further explanation is needed to explain why the remuneration package is important for attraction, performance and retention. Building in indexation, whether performance or automatic, or both, is an important tool for retention and performance. This can be clearer in the section, which may be read as excluding indexation in contracts.</p> <p>Councils would welcome access to the “latest percentage increase in remuneration for Tasmanian public sector senior executive office holders” to inform setting GM remuneration.</p>
Reappointment of the general manager	Reporting salary in an open council meeting	The GM salary is published in the council’s annual report. Reporting in an open council meeting opens the matter up for, what is usually, unhelpful debate. The salary, and the remuneration package, is determined based on a range of factors.