

**CORPORATE POLICY FRAMEWORK & GUIDELINE - TEMPLATE**

**PREAMBLE**

This document is a template of a Corporate Policy Framework & Guideline, which aims to provide:

* a corporate approach (Framework) to developing and reviewing Policies; and
* a guideline to provide considerations, tips and steps to developing and reviewing Policies.

It is important to acknowledge that this template may not be exhaustive and/or include specific approaches your Council may have to developing and reviewing Policies.

This Template should be read in conjunction with the Governance Advisory Services Resource entitled “Policy Compliance Matrix”, on LG Central, when considering Policies that should be in your Corporate Policy Register. In addition, the Department of Local Government has a suite of helpful compliance accountability checklists which are also available on LG Central.

LG Central is available at <https://lgcentral.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/>

Councils are encouraged to customise this document with their branding, style guide and specific approaches/procedures.

Throughout the document there will be through bubbles, tips and comments in text boxes. These are to provide some further information to consider when drafting your document from this template. These can be removed/deleted for your version.

*Note: Your council may use different terminology and/or department names (e.g., EMT – Executive Management Team v SLT – Strategic Leadership Team). These are for your council to amend as appropriate.*

All pages from this point forward make up the template for your Council’s use/reference.

|  |
| --- |
| NB: This template/resource is a living document. If you have any suggestions/feedback, please forward your comments to [ga@lgmaqld.org.au](mailto:ga@lgmaqld.org.au) |

*This resource has been prepared in partnership between LGMA and the Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works through the Governance Advisory Service.*

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Version Control

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Change** | **Date last updated** | **Authorised/**  **Endorsed by** |
| 1.0 | Original adopted version |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

TIP: Where they are minor amendments, maintain the continuous numerical version number i.e. 1.1

Change to the next number (2.0) when there is a comprehensive review of the Framework/Guideline

*Review: Recommended that as part of the corporate protocols, this Framework/Guideline be reviewed at least every two years*

# **AIM**

The purpose of this Framework is to provide guidance on the types of policies within Council, the approval authority process and instructions on how to develop/review policies – i.e. a corporate approach (Framework) to developing and reviewing Policies.

# **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

## WHY COUNCILS HAVE POLICIES

A policy is a statement of principles or position that is intended to guide or direct decision-making and operations that support the achievement of Council’s vision and objectives. Policies have high level direction, a long-term focus and are applied across Council as a whole. They form the foundation of Council’s governance processes and the basis of the quality system.

Policies support the achievement of quality outcomes and reduce institutional risk by establishing standards and internal controls. The principles outlined in policies are shaped by:

* the legislation and regulations that govern Council (and local government);
* national standards, best practice and community expectations;
* the values and vision Council articulates in its strategic plan.

All policies are living documents until such time as they are amended, replaced or repealed, which must all be actioned through the appropriate approval authority. Where there is conflict with an Act or Regulation, the legislation overrides the Policy.

TIP: do not repeat legislation in a policy, refer to the section to reduce risk of conflict if amended

Graphical user interface, application, Word

Description automatically generated

Note: it is important to differentiate between what is a Policy, Guideline or Procedure and which is the appropriate tool for your purpose. Refer to the other resources avialable in the LG Centre: “Policies, Procedures and Guidelines – What are they and which should I use?” to assist in identifying the correct tool*.*

## POLICY CATEGORIES

Categories assist the organisation in determining the basis of policies and ensure that the appropriate ‘arm’ of the organisation is considering and adopting policies. The following outlines Council’s framework for policy types.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **POLICY TYPE** | **POLICY CATEGORY** | **RATIONALE** | **EXAMPLE** |
| Council Policies | Statutory | Legislative requirement or prescribed in the relevant legislation | Audit Committee; Disposal of Council Property; Procurement |
| Community | Direct impact on the community | Community Engagement; Naming of Parks |
| Administrative | Provide direction for internal management of the day to day operations of Council. These policies don't have a direct impact on the community | Fleet/Motor Vehicle;  Conference Attendance |
| Management Policies | Operational | Provide direction for internal management of the day to day operations of Council | Study leave, Higher Duties, Recognition of Service, Corporate Uniform |

**NB: terminology may differ from Council to Council i.e., often Administrative and Management are interchangeable and/or in some councils Management Directives are adopted.**

## POLICY APPROVAL AUTHORITIES

The following authorities are delegated under this Framework:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **POLICY TYPE** | **APPROVE NEW POLICIES OR AMENDMENTS TO POLICIES** | **EXAMPLE** |
| **Approval Authority** | **Reporting Requiemetns** |
| Council Policy¹ | Council | Not applicable |
| Management Policy | CEO/EMT | Council for noting |
| Policy Documents₂ | CEO/EMT | Manager for endorsement |

Tip:

1 if there is a requirement for Council policies to be submitted to the CEO or EMT in the first instance for review and endorsement to proceed, suggest clear instructions noted

2 Policy documents are the documents that support policies and include forms, guidelines, procedures, etc.

**NB: These approval authorities will be dependent on your Council’s delegations**

## POLICY REVIEW PROTOCOL

Council must review its policies on a regular basis, at minimum once a year. As this can be quite onerous on time, the following is a suggested cycle for reviews:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **REVIEW** | **FREQUENCY** | **COMMENTS** |
| Desktop review | Year 1 | Aim is to comprehensively review each policy every two years. This would be flagged in the Corporate Policy Register to trigger the review |
| Comprehensive review | Year 2\* |

*\*Note that there are some Policies that are required to be updated annually (e.g. budget related policies). These will be identified and manged through the Corporate Policy Regsiter.*

The comprehensive review would involve each Manager updating and confirming the legitimacy/currency of their policies. A report will be forwarded to the approving authority for considering for readoption.

Tip: Recommended to submit for readoption even if there are no amendments. This provides evidence of review and that Policy is up to date. Beneficial during audits to provide this evidence.

It is noted that reviews or updates to policies do not have to wait for the formal review periods mentioned above. If a policy requires updating, departments are encouraged to progress this at any time to ensure Council’s policies are up to date and reflect best practice.

## POLICY ADMINISTRATION

The Policy Register and reviews will be administered through the *<Governance Department/Branch>.*

Once a policy has been adopted by the relevant approval authority, and the *<Governance Department/Branch>* advised and evidence of approval provided, the final version will be prepared for publication, which will include but not limited to:

* removal of the draft watermark;
* Corporate Policy Register updated;
* policy number and other relevant information updated on the policy; and
* published on Council’s systems.

Any education or training required on the policy is the responsibility of the custodian (owner) department and must be considered when developing and submitting the policy for approval, including any cost implications.

There will be one location on Council’s website for all appropriately authorised policies, as there also will be on *<Council’s intranet>.*

NB: This will be dependent on your internal procedures and registers.

The *<Governance Department/Branch>* will facilitate version control on all adopted policies and ensure a record is made of amended, replaced and repealed policies in the appropriate register.

## POLICY DEVELOPMENT

While the *<Governance Department/Branch>* is available to provide advice on policy development, it is noted that the owner/responsible department is the content and knowledge expert. The owner/responsible department are responsible for developing, consulting and requesting approval for all policies.

# **POLICY DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES**

## WHAT ARE POLICIES?

Policies are clear, simple statements of how *<Council name>* intends to conduct its services, actions or business. They provide a set of guiding principles to help with decision making. A policy sets out *<Council’s name>* position on a specific matter but does not necessarily prescribe in detail how to perform certain functions. The main characteristics of policies are that they are formally documented, approved and reviewed. Compliance is required, and non-compliance may be actionable through appropriate HR/conduct policies and procedures.

Policies don't need to be long or complicated – a couple of sentences may be all you need for each policy area. Policies relate to issues where *<Council name>* requires a certain line of action to be followed, consistently. Many policies are prepared to respond to legislative requirements and/or best practice protocols.

Policies should not be used for adhoc, once off decision making and must be adopted by the approval authority identified in this Framework.

There may be occasions that a policy is required for a specific reason (i.e. COVID related policies). It is important that they have a review period and are considered appropriately when they may have become redundant or replaced by superior directives, etc and are repealed.

## DEFINITION OF A POLICY

A policy is a concise formal statement that outlines non-discretionary governing principles and intentions, in order to guide *<Council name>* practices. Policies are a formal statement of intent that mandate principles or standards that apply to *<Council’s name>* governance, operations or to the practice and conduct of its elected members and employees/contractors. In short, policy provides members of *<Council name>* with direction on the approved way of operating in relation to a particular matter.

## THE ROLE OF POLICY

Policy plays an important role within *<Council’s name>* operations and decision making. It provides the principles which dictate how the members of *<Council name>* should act.

Those principles are derived from and shaped by:

* the law and regulations that govern *<Council name>;*
* national/industry standards, best practice and community expectations; and
* the values and mission *<Council name>* articulates in its strategic plan.

It is the role of Policy to:

* set standards and a position of *<Council name>;*
* ensure compliance with legal and statutory responsibilities;
* guide *<Council name>* towards the achievement of its strategic plan;
* provide a framework for action and decision making; and
* improve the management of risk.

Policies are intended to be long term in application and are reviewed at least annually. Risk management principles should be considered during policy development.

## POLICY DEVELOPMENT STAGES & GUIDANCE

This guideline provides the development stages and guidance for all policies, whether they are new or amended. It is noted that all policies are living documents until they are amended, replaced or repealed, which must all be actioned through the appropriate approval authority.

The policy development phase (including amendment) involves the following stages:

### Stage 1: Approval/Support to proceed

The need for a policy may arise for the following reasons:

* As a result of legislation
* A directive from Council, CEO or Directors
* To mitigate risk
* To formalise a strategic position or program

When considering the development of a new policy or amending a current policy, also reflect on the following:

* Is a new policy required or amendment to an existing policy?
  + *Option to consider also is to consolidate policies*
* Does creating or amending a policy impact on other policies or procedures? (or council position)

Ensure that the development of a new policy isn’t a reactive response and if there is a need for a policy to respond to an issue. There may be more appropriate responses to deal with one-off issues, however when doing so, consider any unintended consequences and creation of a precedence.

All new policies and substantial amendments to existing policies require approval to proceed from the relevant Director, or if applicable CEO/EMT prior to drafting or re-drafting.

Minor amendments to an existing policy may be submitted directly to EMT for processing. Minor amendments are changes that do not impact on the scope, intent or application of the policy (for example changes to position titles as a result of organisational change, broken hyperlinks, typographical errors).

### Stage 2: Drafting

Policies must be drafted using the approved template and include the word 'draft' as a watermark. Definitions used in policies must be consistent with Council’s terminology, etc. If you are altering a policy, all changes must be made in mark-up to clearly identify the amendments.

Draft policies must not be made available externally, except with the approval of the relevant Director and/or CEO.

Unless mandatory in nature, refrain from including procedural matters/steps in a policy. Where procedures are required to support a policy, they should be developed and submitted for approval with the policy.

Ensure that the correct legislation, standards and/or directives are referred/quoted

***Important****: always ensure that if you are proposing a new policy, that it is not in conflict with any other current policy. Identify any conflicts and either propose amendments to that policy as well and/or consider if it needs to be replaced/repealed. Ensure you consult with the owner of the policy regardless of what department they are in.*

When drafting a new policy, *<Governance Department/Branch >* should be advised as a courtesy.

### Stage 3: Consultation

Consultation should be widespread, inclusive and provide sufficient time for the provision of feedback.

All policies that impact workplace relations, human resources and other staffing matters must be referred to *<HR Department/Branch>* for consultation with staff, as appropriate, in accordance with enterprise agreements and similar documents.

Where the application of a policy has a significant impact on more than one functional area, it is appropriate to ensure widespread consultation has been undertaken and all parties support the document to progress for approval.

It is recommended that Managers/reviewer consult with other stakeholders. As a suggestion, new policies are raised at EMT/Managers Forum for noting and if applicable reviewed/discussed.

For quality assurance and document control purposes, the *<Governance Department/Branch>* must be consulted on final drafts prior to submission for approval. This will allow them to ensure all is in order prior to the approval process. All Council policies must be submitted to EMT in the first instance for review and endorsement to proceed to Council for consideration/adoption (unless it is a policy that can be adopted by the CEO/EMT under delegation).

### Stage 4: Document Control

All documents must be provided to the *<Governance Department/Branch>* PRIOR to seeking approval from the approval authority. The *<Governance Department/Branch>* will complete the document control process including:

* Adding a ‘DRAFT’ watermark to the document.
* Issuing a document identifier, version control and completing the Approvals banner and footer information.
* Performing a quality check on the formatting and style of the document.

Once complete the documents will be provided to the document owner in pdf format so that they can seek document approval.

### Stage 5: Document Approval

The approval authority for policies is as outlined previously.

Approval from all stakeholders must be documented. A covering report and final approved version of the policy must be submitted to the formal EMT agenda when seeking approval.

NB: This will be dependent on your internal procedures, delegations and preferred wording. However wording must be clear of intent on public record and repeal previous versions.

When submitting a policy for approval, the author must always ensure the appropriate recommendation wording is provided. In particular, if the policy is replacing another policy and/or repealing a policy. The example below may be used as a reference.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **NAME OF APPROVAL AUTHORITY** | **AMENDED POLICY** | **NEW POLICY** |
| Standing  Committee  (if Standing committee have deleated authority, remove ‘recommends to Council’) | That the [*insert name of committee*] recommends that Council:  1. Repeal the existing *[insert name of policy*] [*insert document number* (XXX-XXX-XXX)];  2. Adopt the updated *[insert name of policy*] [*insert document number* (XXX-XXX-XXX)]. | That the [*insert name of committee*] recommends that Council adopt the updated *[insert name of policy*] [*insert document number* (XXX-XXX-XXX)]. |
| Council | That Council:  1. Repeal the existing *[insert name of policy*] [*insert document number* (XXX-XXX-XXX)];  2. Adopt the updated *[insert name of policy*] [*insert document number* (XXX-XXX-XXX)]. | That Council   1. Adopt the updated *[insert name of policy*] [*insert document number* (XXX-XXX-XXX)]. |
| Executive Management  Team | That the Executive Management Team:  1. Repeals the existing *[insert name of policy*] [*insert document number* (XXX-XXX-XXX)];  2. Adopts the updated *[insert name of policy*] [*insert document number* (XXX-XXX-XXX)]. | That the Executive Management Team adopts the updated *[insert name of policy*] [*insert document number* (XXX-XXX-XXX)]. |

### Stage 6: Publication and Communication

Once the policy is formally adopted, *<Governance Department/Branch>* will ensure a record is made of amended, replaced and repealed policies in the appropriate Corporate Policy Register. Once recorded the policy will be uploaded to the appropriate location on *<Council’s intranet and/or Council’s website>.*

The *<Governance Department/Branch>* will notify the owner/responsible department once this has occurred.

### Stage 7: Implementation

Owners/responsible departments are responsible for advising staff of new or substantially revised policies via relevant online communications. The responsible department may need to develop an implementation and communication plan for major amendments or new policies. The plans must as a minimum outline any potential impacts on systems and business processes and list any required training.

### Stage 8: Evaluation and Review

Evaluation and review of all policies shall occur as outlined in the Policy Review Protocol section of this framework.

Formal review of policies will be facilitated by the *<Governance Department/Branch>.*

## MAINTENANCE AND REPORTING

All policies will remain in force unless:

* formally repealed by the relevant approval authority (i.e. no longer required), or
* superseded by an updated version of the Policy:
  + this also could include where a policy has been consolidated or renamed – which would require the previously named document/version to be repealed.

Details of repealed or superseded versions will be maintained by the *<Governance Department/Branch> on* an appropriate register.

## TIPS & HINTS - HOW TO WRITE A POLICY

Tip:

Recommend that a template be developed for all officers to use for consistency.

The Following is a proposed format and purpose of content

Council has adopted standard templates that must be used for the development of policies and associated documents. The following provides a summary of the key focus areas for attention.

### Format

The styles shown in the template MUST be used – Do not modify the template or styles. Further information on formatting and styles is available in Council’s Document Development Style Guide and the Brand Guidelines available on Council’s intranet.

### Details Table

Complete the table rows referring to Policy Title and Responsible Department. The *<Governance Department/Branch>* will complete the remainder of the table.

### Policy Title/Name

Ensure the title of the policy captures the subject of the policy as unambiguously as possible. Consider the perspective of the reader when naming the policy.

### Objective

This section must provide a succinct purpose of the policy. If the policy is responding to a legislative requirement, refer to the relevant Act or Regulation and section. Other inclusions to consider are codes of practice, international standards and government directives.

### Scope

Provide a clear statement about when and to whom the policy applies (staff, volunteers, contractor, Councillors etc).

### Definitions

Provide definitions where meaning of words are at risk of being interchangeable and/or interpreted differently. Also use this section to note any acronyms. If no content is required for this section, include the words ‘not applicable’.

Ensure consistency with organisational terminology.

### Policy Statement

Clearly state the standards or essential features which underpin decision-making and /or the way members of Council conduct the activities.

### Legislation and related guidelines

Identify relevant legislation and/or codes etc that influence this policy and/or reference materials that provide further guidance to users. Ensure references are to current versions.

### Document ID/Name

Provide all relevant internal references that link to the Policy. For example, relevant forms, templates, guidelines or procedures.

## DRAFTING HINTS

* Write the policy in plain English. Be clear and concise, and avoid jargon, complex language and long paragraphs. Aim to communicate as simply and effectively as possible with consideration for the intended audience.
* Do not allow for every possible interpretation of the policy, try to close every loophole or attempt to accommodate all exceptions, as this can complicate the policy unnecessarily. Stakeholders with difficulties interpreting the policy can consult the policy owner or raise with <Governance Department> to follow-up with the policy owner.
* If an action is mandatory, use 'must'. If the action is recommended, use 'recommended' or ‘may’. Avoid the use of 'should' and 'shall'. Try to limit the use of ‘will’ to occasions when it is describing a future action; and not as a synonym for ‘must’.
* Use the present tense and active voice where possible.
* Avoid gender-specific pronouns: for example, use 'they' instead of 'he or she'.
* Where acronyms are considered helpful, give the full term/title before using the acronym: for example, ‘Goods & Services Tax (GST)' in the first instance and then use the acronym throughout the document. (option is to also provide reference in the Definition section).
* Do not repeat legislation: – this increases the risk of conflict if the Act has been amended and the Act is the source of truth and should remain so; and for consideration:
  + if relevant legislation covers the policy objective, intent or powers, there is no need for a policy.
* Unless mandatory, procedures should not be included in the policy. Develop supporting procedure that can be amended more readily if required
* Include key criteria for decision making, e.g. community grants.
* Policies should not replace a manager’s responsibilities or delegation.

# **DOCUMENT ID/NAME ID**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **DOCUMENT ID/NAME ID** | **NAME** |
|  | Policy Template |
|  | Policies, Procedures and Guidelines – “What are they and which should I use?” |
|  | Policy Development - Tips and Hints |