

Frequently Asked Questions

Australasian LG Performance Excellence Program

Who owns that data once it is supplied to the program?

Data remains the property of the council; PwC is provided specific rights to use the data, restricted to delivering the project. This mirrors how normal market research companies operate – same principle. PwC must keep data confidential under the terms of the contract. The ability to share data is limited to aggregated survey findings and council specific results will only be available to the council itself and members of the PwC data analytics engagement team.

An excerpt from the website terms is provided below:

The information which is collected as part of the Local Government Operational Effectiveness Survey will be encrypted at rest and in transit using industry practice encryption protocols and PwC will exercise diligence in governing these systems. All data will be held in a secure password protected environment. PwC does not claim ownership of the materials you provide to PwC or post, upload, input or submit as part of the Online Survey Tool. However, by posting, uploading, inputting, providing or submitting your data you are granting PwC permission to use your data for the purpose of performing services under the Agreement between PwC, LG Professionals, NSW and you (the 'Agreement'). The Online Survey Tool ('Online Survey Tool') is comprised of various web pages built, supported and hosted by Infoview Technologies and Amazon Web Services.

What quality control framework is in place to achieve data comparison validity? What is the accepted tolerance in this regard?

The program is a self-assessment program and data is not audited or verified by PwC. However, PwC does, provide participant feedback and highlights submitted data that seems unusual or improbable through this process. The council then has the opportunity to re-submit or amend data. Metrics are derived by calculating from source data. This eliminates a lot of issues because a common calculation methodology is controlled and used for all councils. The onus is on each individual council to review its data submission and to be confident of the completeness and accuracy of submitted data, as we do not adjust the final report. The CEO must sign off the data from council and has accountability to ensure it is accurate.

Please provide more details on the staff training liability associated with successful participation in the program. How many staff does a council generally need to involve and approximately how many hours of staff time per council per year (please specify the average hours for each of the different size council groups that the program has nominated)?

Councils report that first year participation absorbs substantially more staff time than subsequent years. First year participation may absorb 10 -25 days of effort across the organisation. In subsequent years, this can drop to 8-15 days. Multiple users can work together to complete the submission which can spread the workload across the council. We do ask each council to appoint a Project Manager to ensure deadlines are met and data is verified. Generally IT, HR, Finance, Governance/Administration and Service Managers are involved so it will be spread across all these roles. All councils have been successful in completing this work as they have prioritised it.

The resource commitment is also particularly relevant - who we would need to identify as key contacts?

As mentioned in the response to the above question, we ask each council to appoint a Project Manager to ensure deadlines are met and data is verified. Other important staff to involve would be from departments such as HR, Finance, Governance and Administration, Services Managers, Asset Management and IT.

Will Councils be provided templates for the creation of csv files for the bulk-upload of data from their databases? Please provide details on the range of templates provided and any additional support that is provided with the subscription with regard to data collation and upload. From the experience of existing users, are there some areas which tend to require manual collation of data and if so, which areas are these?

Downloadable templates are provided for all questions. The data submission website also provides immediate feedback on submitted data to help councils to make a compliant submission. Additionally, PwC provides a help desk service to assist. Details of every data submission are set out in the Participant Guide. Participants have reported that the Workforce data takes time and effort to assemble but can be system generated where good systems exist. Most councils engage the help of the IT department to write queries to the employee database e.g. Payroll and HR systems and then these queries can be used again in future years. This means that year one is investment but future years are more efficient. Mapping tables (eg. mapping council specific staff levels to our set of standardised staff levels) generally need to be manually collated but do not change very much from year to year. Thus once you have done the first year, thereafter there are only incremental changes.

If a council invests, what type of typical savings or reductions have they seen in 12 months and longer – has any work been done on modelling around ROI?

Councils report high perceived value from the program. The benefits are seen in improved talent management, better leadership of resources, improved decision making and improved workforce management. These benefits are challenging to attribute to specific cost outcomes and we are not aware of councils undertaking specific ROI modelling on the survey.

Below are some real-life examples from a NSW council that has participated from day one in this program and now has 4 years of trend data:

- Replaced Finance Manager with CFO.
- Revised annual budget development process to be shorter & simpler (increased efficiency).
- Performance appraisal completion rates increased (greater management output).
- Introduced realistic job previews with preferred candidates for vacant positions (aiming to address higher turnover in first year of employment).
- Revised new employee survey and introduced requirement for survey to be completed before new employee can complete probation (aiming to address higher turnover in first year of employment).
- Obtained agreement from executive to stop creating very small teams with 2, 3 or 4 people reporting to a coordinator or manager (aiming to increase span of control – employ less managers).

- Brought target 'go live date' for new corporate IT systems forward (aiming to remedy lack of appropriate asset management information system).
- Stronger strategic planning process and engagement across the council ensuring priorities that were identified by report got addressed.
- Stronger corporate reporting across the board using KPIs of the program meant alignment of outcomes across council, less rework and increased accountability.

This process has been completely transformational on many levels for councils and has not been looked upon purely as a cost saving measure. This is evidenced by the fact that there are 69 NSW councils in the program out of an original number of 80 over a very tumultuous period of mergers, and speaks volumes about the benefits for all councils whatever size, shape or circumstance. All participant councils have identified areas of concern to fix or opportunities to realise for improvement. Now the service delivery data is included, there may well be more 'data' rich cases coming forward but this will be the first time councils have seen their service delivery data (Survey 4).

Will my council's report be confidential? Who owns the data? If we exit the program, are we able to continue to access the data supplied for the participating years?

Your report will be completely confidential. It will not be shared nor visible to anyone other than you (the local government recipient) and the specific PwC Analyst/s. Only the aggregated results will be visible to LG Professionals, SA and LG Professionals, NSW and all local government survey participants. Each local government will have to agree to the data use terms and conditions directly with PwC upon provision of the data into the survey portal. These will state that your local government will consent for the use of their own data by PwC Analytics for the specific purposes of generating findings for you as the survey participant, and that PwC can share only the aggregate sample results to enrich other PwC reports (similar to the way PwC will be utilising other aggregated PwC study findings across their global networks for the enhancement of your report and survey).

You have the ability to download all final reports and information from the Council Comparative Analysis Tool (Tool) and we encourage councils to retain a copy of their submitted data for their records anyway (it assists the next year's process to have a copy of the old). You only have access to the Tool for the period that you remain as a participating council. You cannot access the data past your program subscription.

You can resubscribe to the program at any time (minimum of 3 years) but will only have access to data of that year/s you participate. The Program includes the Report and the Tool so you cannot just subscribe to the Tool, nor access historical data as the data is overwritten each year. Your results will always remain part of the aggregated survey findings for any year that you participate and appear in trend data for all participants.

Can I distribute the report/s?

Yes, at your/your local government's discretion. There are clauses that you need to ensure are visible when presenting data yourselves, that explains the context for how recipients should interpret the findings they are reading.

Is it possible to trial participation? Rather than having to lock in completely?

Minimum participation for initial launch is 3 years. After that, two year renewals are only permitted with agreement from PwC and LG Professionals, NSW and then it's 20% premium price on top.

What is the nature of the relationships between LG Professionals, SA, LG Professionals, NSW and PwC?

Your local government will have a direct contractual relationship for the delivery of the program with both LG Professionals, NSW and PwC as service providers to you. LG Professionals SA is playing a support and overseeing role for LG Professionals, NSW and PwC to ensure a smooth process and to provide advice.

How was the survey designed?

The survey was created from a series of consultations in NSW. Initially, a meeting was held with a group of local government practitioners (LG Professionals, NSW members) in 2013. The idea was to identify and outline the key areas of interest. LG Professionals, NSW piloted with 15 local governments a subset of the questions which were very successful. The content was reviewed again and confirmed with its focus refined to be on purely operational and management areas. A technical sub group was formed and LG Professionals, NSW proposed the final areas for research with input from this group.

LG Professionals, SA has been able to review all elements in the survey in light of our sector's needs and minor adaptations have been made. We believe that by working together we can continue to refine this for the future also as part of the overall process and look forward to our members having input into the future development of this program with our inter-state and international colleagues.

What does the program cover?

The survey covers / measures the areas of:

- Corporate Leadership
- Operations Management
- Workforce Planning
- Finance Management
- Risk Management
- Service Delivery

Some of the questions you will be able to answer as a result of the report are:

- What is the level of corporate development, strategic planning and accountability in your council?
- What is the shape of your local government meetings and how effective are they?
- Are decisions being made at the right level?
- What quality of policy support do you have?
- How effective and efficient is your finance function?
- Is the business being supported with enough analysis?

- What impact does your budgeting process have?
- How effective is your rates collection and is there an impact on your cash flow?
- Is your operational planning and project management approach effective?
- How well are you managing your risk and supplier risk?
- How productive is your internal audit process for your size of business?
- What shape is your level of systems investment?
- Do you have a visible customer service focus in the organisation?
- What is the generational profile of your workforce and what is this showing you about your workforce capacity?
- Are your leave liabilities able to be more successfully managed?
- What are the indicators of workforce productivity telling you?
- What is the span of control and relative level of focus you have on management?
- What is the right level of training investment for optimal return?
- How robust is your workforce plan?
- Does your service profile differ to others?
- What do your proportions of 'own workforce' costs look like compared to your total service costs when compared to others?
- How does the profile of your workforce by service areas compare to the rest of the sector?
- Is your split of insourced and outsourced similar or different to other local governments?
- Does your service mix look different to the sector?

What is the commitment required of our council? What level of work is required?

The process does require councils to commit resource/s and project manage implementation. You may need support from IT to assist with an extract from your payroll and HR systems as well as support from Finance, and also HR, especially if your records are manual. In NSW the smallest local government in the state (1400 population) managed to do this successfully – as has the largest. We expect that local governments should not need to spend more than 2 weeks of one full time staff member the first time they do this.

There is a reasonable amount of work in this study for local governments but the benefits are significant so it's worth the investment in time. PwC will support you significantly and in addition, Australian practitioners will be on hand should you need additional support. Staff will be fully trained in what is required and they will be supported.

Upon agreeing to participate, you are obligated to do everything you can to ensure that your responsibilities under the program are fulfilled to ensure the success for all participants.

Can I join after the closing date of 15 July 2017?

In general, local governments will not be able to join after the closing date because there is a significant amount of implementation and management across both states and countries for PwC. For the project management to go smoothly for everyone, it is very important that you are ready and committed early.

What data will be in the Online Tool?

A range of survey metrics from local governments Survey 5 results, relevant publically available data on local government areas. The ability to sub-segment means you can look at results at a deeper level – across clusters of local governments who ‘look more like you’ / have your characteristics. For added precaution and confidentiality, once the filtering process is applied the Tool will only ever display results for 5 or more de-identified local governments.

Who can access the Online Tool?

It is intended that each local government will nominate 5 users who can access this tool.

How do I access the Online Tool?

It will be made available through a secure online portal and multiple users can access it at the same time. It is very easy to use and training will be provided.

How long will the Online Tool remain open?

All local governments will have access to the current survey metrics for one year until it is refreshed with the next survey data (likely to be around December 2018).

Can I print information from the Online Tool or export the visual representations held within it?

Yes, local governments can get access to the relevant elements of the Online Tool so they are useful in an ongoing sense to share within local government such as for use in reports or plans.

What are my responsibilities in using the Online Tool?

You can use the Online Tool as much or as little as you like for your own analysis and all we ask is that it is treated respectfully and is only for local government’s access.

What are the critical dates?

- Early Bird discount offer closes 15 July 2017.
- Final Closing Date to join the program – 15 July 2017 (all contracts must be signed by then).
- Data submission begins first week of August 2017.
- Final data submitted and local government review closes on 1st October (local government signed off)
- PwC Analysis October/November/ December 2017
- Report issued December 2017.

How long do I have to decide whether or not I want to commit?

The absolute last date to decide and commit is 15 July 2017.

Who is providing the service?

LG Professionals, NSW is providing the service to all New Zealand and Australian local governments with PwC Sydney. There will be a contract for your local government's commitment with LG Professionals, NSW and PwC as all three parties have responsibilities in this process. This contract is to ensure that the project parties are clear on their roles and understand what is happening and will cover:

- Principles of the service being provided.
- Payment terms.
- Best endeavours requirement on all parties.
- Use and ownership of the data.
- If the program does not begin or fails to be fulfilled.

What are the payment terms?

Payment terms will be 7 days from the invoice date, NB only local governments who have paid their invoice/s can start to input data in the submission phase. Arrangements can be made for you to be billed in the 2016/17 financial year or the 2017/18 financial year on request.

Who can I contact for questions?

For general questions about the program, please contact:

Taryn Sexton – CEO, Local Government Professionals Australia, SA
executive@lgprofessionalssa.org.au or by phone on 8291 7991 / 0400 429 003

Annalisa Haskell – CEO, LG Professionals, NSW
Annalisa.Haskell@lgprofessionals.com.au or by phone on 02 8297 1209 / 0421 582 099

To contact PwC about the technical details of the survey process, e-mail Sarah Gibson – Associate Director on localgovt.insights@au.pwc.com