

Background

The Australian Local Government Workforce and Employment Census (formerly the National Minimum Dataset) is part of a national initiative by federal, state and territory local government ministers to improve local government workforce development. The census is funded by the Australian Government. The Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) is co-ordinating the initiative.

A national local government workforce strategy is also being prepared and will be submitted to state, federal and territory governments for consideration. State local government associations (LGAs), Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) and the Australian Services Union (ASU) have been involved in this project throughout its development.

The workforce census has been designed to collect standardised workforce data from all 565 councils across Australia, to allow workforce analysis by region, council classification and by state. The census will enable councils to benchmark themselves against aggregated groupings of councils (national, state, and regional).

The information will be used to improve workforce planning capacity within individual councils and to support sector-wide and jurisdictional efforts to address skill shortages, enhance the professionalism of local government and facilitate greater workforce diversity. The census will also develop and maintain a nationally consistent dataset on women's participation in the local government sector, including both elected representatives and senior management positions.

Following extensive consultation with key stakeholders across the sector a minimum dataset has been agreed to and adopted, and an interactive data collection tool has been developed to facilitate the collection of the data across the sector.

Project status

The dataset to be collected has been finalised, following considerable consultation with jurisdictions, State LGAs and councils themselves, with additional input from the ASU and Government Skills Australia (GSA)

Pilot councils have been recruited and pilot surveys have been scheduled for the week commencing 19th November. The census itself will commence on 30th November.

Methodology

Data collection for the ALGWECensus is being conducted online by ACELG, using VoVici online survey software. Features of the online survey include:

- Ability to close and reopen the survey without losing data.
- Survey software conducts skips through the questionnaire and ensures that councils are only asked those questions relevant to them.
- A printout of data entered is generated at the end of the survey for council's records.

Approximately ten days prior to the commencement of the data collection, each council will receive an information pack including the background and objectives of the census, the benefits to councils of completing the census, as well as detailed information about each of the data fields being collected. This will enable them to start gathering the data

prior to the census going live.

Communications

Prior to the census going live, ACELG will be rolling out a national communications strategy (including print, on-line and social media) aimed at informing the sector about the census and encouraging participation.

A blog/web site is being established where questions about the ALGWECensus can be asked by those completing the survey, and discussions about the project hosted in a public forum. The website will also be used to promote the project.

Distribution

Most councils will receive a link to the survey, and accompanying information pack via their jurisdictions, in advance of the census opening on 30th November. Councils who do not receive their invitation from their jurisdictions but would still like to participate in the census will be able to register on the [ALGWECensus](#) website and will be sent an invitation directly.

Data

In developing this minimum dataset, we have been very aware that not all councils will, in the first year, have access to all of the information. Where possible we have designed the data collection tool to accommodate that, and councils will be able to work around missing data.

The actual data collected in the census includes:

- Elected reps by age and gender
- Mayor by gender and method of election
- Staff (headcount) X gender X highest post school qualification
- Occupation (headcount) X age and gender
- Commencements separations (past 12 months) X occupation, age and gender
- Management level by area of council business (4 streams) by gender
- Directly employed apprentices by occupation/trade and by failed to complete
- Study/training support (including in kind) support X occupation and gender (past 12 months)
- Organisational training budget x \$
- Total payroll \$ (as supplied to ABS for earnings survey)
- Total positions vacant:
 - Vacant < 6 months x top three occupations
 - **Vacant 6 – 12 months X top three occupations**
 - Vacant > 12 months X top three occupations
- Workforce planning status
- Diversity targets:
 - Do they have them
 - How many currently (headcount) X gender and employment status
 - How many target (headcount) X gender and employment status

Pilot survey

The census is being piloted with eight councils across five states. Pilot councils have been selected to represent a cross section of Australian councils by size, geographic location and capacity.

The main purpose of the survey is to ensure that the data collection tool is easy to use, and that the wording of the question and project information are clear and unambiguous.

The pilots are being conducted during the week commencing the 19th November, and will be attended by the ALGWE Census Project Coordinator to ensure that feedback is directly received and questions are answered on the spot.

Feedback from the pilot surveys will be incorporated into the final data collection tool.

Data collection

Data collection will commence on the 30th November and the survey will remain open until the 21st of December.

Unless otherwise specified data will be collected from individual councils, entering the data through the interactive data collection tool.

Councils will be given access to a “sandpit” tool where they can familiarise themselves with the methodology, test enter the data, and where required obtain a print-out of their draft data for sign off before they proceed to the official survey.

During the survey they can stop and restart the survey without losing any data they have already entered, and they can go back and change their responses.

Once they have pressed submit they cannot edit their responses.

Reporting

Each council will receive a print out of their own data following submission of their data. No council will be able to access another council’s data. ACELG will analyse the data and provide reports at classification, regional (RDA region) and jurisdictional level.

Individual councils will receive reports for their classification and region as well jurisdiction. They will be able to compare their results to those only, and not to other individual councils.

Jurisdictions will be given access to the data once the data collection is finished, via a reporting tool provided by ACELG.

As a contribution to the Local Government and Planning Ministers’ Council Women in Local Government Strategy, a separate report, analysing the gender aspect of the data will be prepared by ACELG for the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, and will also be made publicly available on the ACELG website.

Further information

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