



## DISCUSSION PAPER

### Updated November 2012

**The Advancing Leadership Initiative** is aimed at broadening leadership capacity for professionals working within Australian Local Government. It has been developed in response to the urgent need to nurture those mid-tier local government professionals who aspire to be better leaders and make more effective contributions to improved outcomes for their councils and communities.

'Advancing Leadership' aims to raise the capability, capacity and credibility of local government via a network of quality development programs delivered in a variety of modes and by a combination of providers.

#### The purpose of the initiative is to:

- Cultivate leaders who are best equipped to deal with themes, issues and relationships unique to the sector of local government
- Retain and upskill committed and aspirational staff
- Make local government a desirable place to work ; building pride across current staff and attracting new staff
- Raise the profile of local government on a national and international scale
- Bridge gaps in the current training and development market for middle management leaders

#### Key elements of the initiative that are outlined in this paper include:

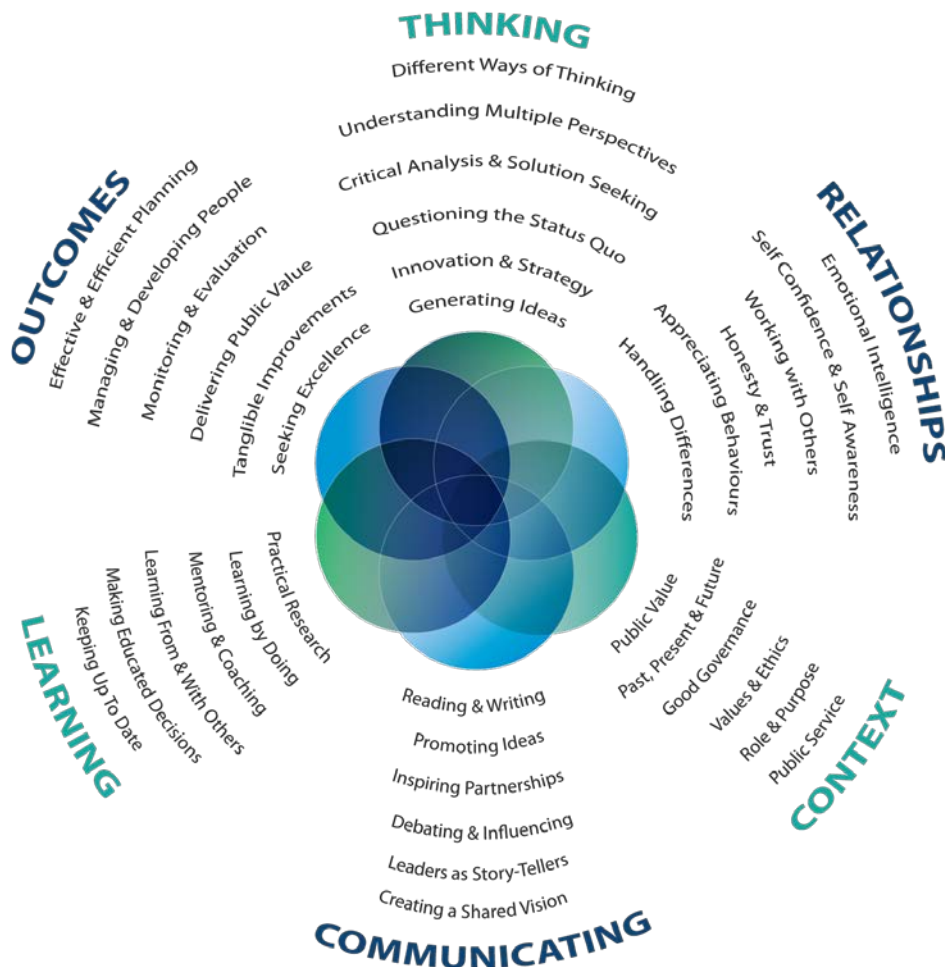
- The Advancing Leadership Framework
- The Advancing Leadership partnership
- The 'Model' Graduate Certificate in Local Government Leadership
- The first two years of implementation

**The Advancing Leadership Framework** has been adapted from a conceptual professional competency framework researched and developed over many years at the University of Technology Sydney. The framework has been tailored to local government in Australia as part of the Advancing Leadership initiative and is an evolving tool that is open to modification.

- The Framework comprises of 6 core capabilities: Thinking, Relationships, Context, Communicating, Learning and Outcomes, each associated with fundamental competencies.
- These competencies form a suggested structure that can be utilised to underpin effective local government leadership learning initiatives.

**The purpose of the framework is to:**

- Provide guidance on key elements of local government leadership development
- Foster a national approach to local government leadership capabilities
- Offer a high standard framework that is academically endorsed and rigorously researched
- Incorporate learning areas that can apply to different locations and contexts
- Be a reliable developmental tool for use by academic and practitioner led training and learning programs targeted at local government aspiring leaders



**The Advancing Leadership Partnership** is a national network of academic institutions, local government bodies and learning practitioners that collaborate in different areas and locations to progress the objectives of the Advancing Leadership initiative. Examples of how these partnerships are working across Australia can be found on pages 6-7 of this paper.

## **The purpose of the partnership is to:**

### **Share ideas**

- Create a 'meeting place' for those with a genuine (and not simply commercial) interest in local government training and development, and a commitment to the advancement of leadership capability within the sector
- Maintain an ongoing forum of discussion around learning needs with collective responsibility for evolving the framework according to changes in context, experiential practice, and core competency requirements
- Share and discuss feedback and experience of people participating in local government development programs
- Exchange ideas on leadership challenges and trends for local government professionals

### **Strengthen existing programs**

- Improve program viability by cross-promoting related initiatives
- Mutually recognise best practice in leadership development offers across the sector and create opportunities to showcase these
- Offer a platform for the co-operative development of programs, resources and materials for distribution and use by partners
- Develop a range of recognised electives from within the framework creating opportunities and pathways for individuals to embark on associated graduate programs
- Establish a comprehensive suite of various programs offered – by a variety of partnership providers, and through a variety of modalities – around the country, providing a balance between national consistency and the flexibility to meet local circumstances

### **Identify areas for program development**

- Identify gaps in current programs, materials and availability, and collaborate to develop responses to address those gaps
- Provide a focus for the collective attempt to address some of the discrepancies in leadership training availability for local government around the country – especially in rural, remote and indigenous communities
- Signal to Federal and State governments that there is a cohesive understanding of the training needs for this group of participants, creating opportunity for a far- better targeted allocation of scarce training and education funds

## Background to the Advancing Leadership Initiative

The Australian Government has contributed \$8 million in funding for the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government. The Centre's mandate is to enhance professionalism and skills in local government, showcase innovation and best practice, and facilitate a better-informed policy debate.

An 'Aspiring Leaders' Program was initiated in response to the urgent need to nurture those working in local government with aspirations to be better leaders and create improved outcomes. A research and discussion paper was circulated in September 2010 to get feedback from the sector on how best to move ahead. In light of feedback received, and to avoid confusion with existing activities, the program was renamed 'The Advancing Leadership Initiative' and ideas about how it should operate have been developed.

Further information on ACELG, the Advancing Leadership Initiative and the background discussion document can be found at [www.acelg.com.au](http://www.acelg.com.au).

## The Model Graduate Certificate in Local Government Leadership

A key element of the initiative is a 'model' *Graduate Certificate in Local Government Leadership* which applies the Advancing Leadership Framework. This is a *university-level postgraduate qualification* and has been developed on ACELG's behalf by the UTS Centre for Local Government, Sydney.

The 'model' Graduate Certificate consists of 4 subjects:

- New Perspectives on Local Government Leadership (core)
- Personal and Professional Leadership Skills
- Community Leadership Project
- Team Building and Leadership (in conjunction with LGMA Management Challenge)

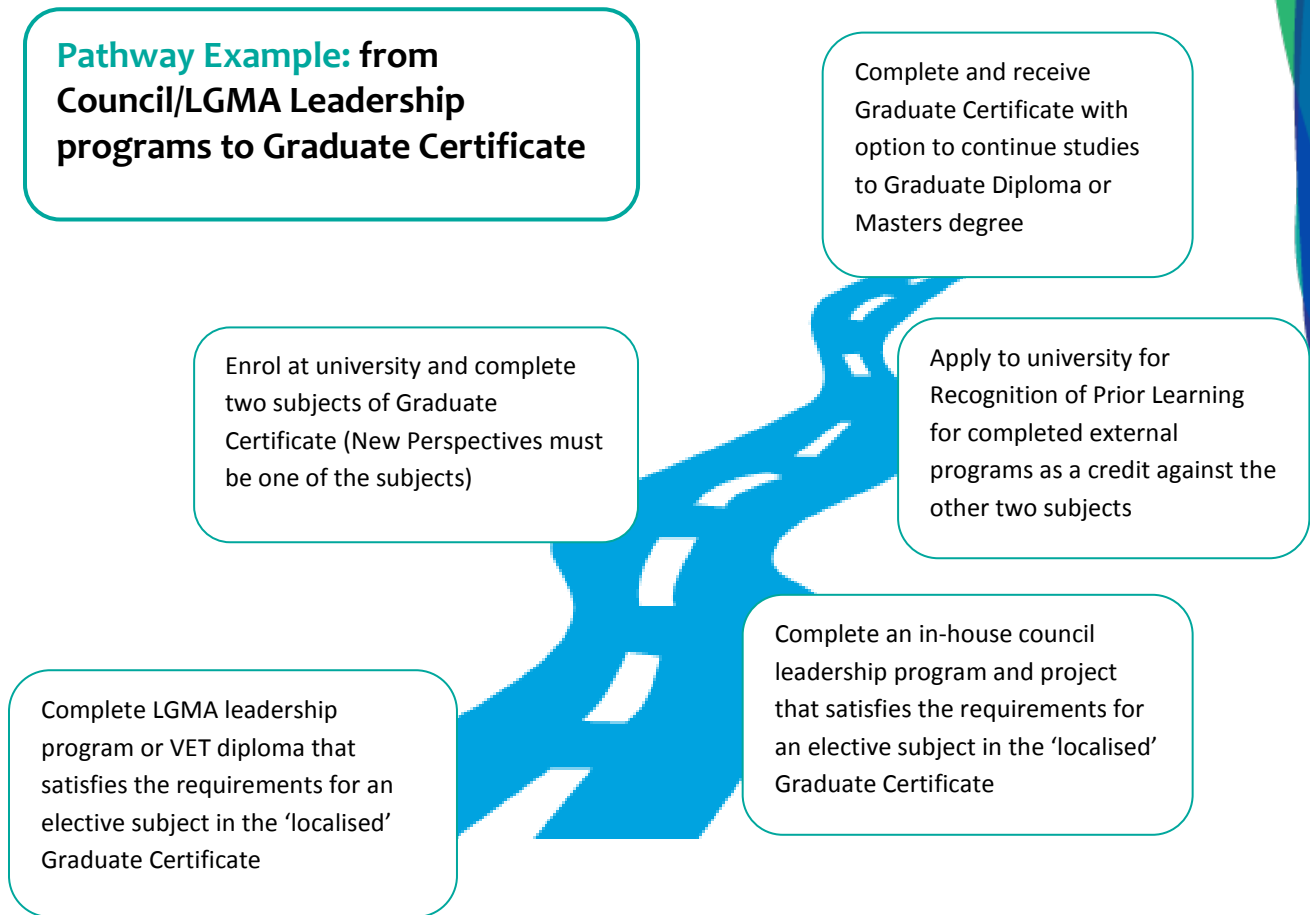
*Further electives may also be available depending on the provider*

As a general rule, it is expected that at least two subjects will have to be undertaken as an enrolled university student, but various forms of Recognition of Prior Learning ('exemptions') will be available for the other two subjects. All participants are expected to undertake 'New Perspectives' as a core subject.

The model Graduate Certificate can be 'localised' by any university willing to offer the essential curriculum involved. Provided that intellectual property is duly acknowledged and respected, program materials will be made available to members of the Advancing Leaders Partnership by ACELG at no charge, and ACELG will assist in adapting materials to local needs and initial delivery of subjects.

The model Graduate Certificate is designed to offer flexible entry pathways from existing programs, especially LGMA Leadership programs or their equivalent, leadership development programs offered by individual councils, and vocational educational (VET or TAFE) diplomas. The diagram below gives an example of how one such pathway might work.

## Pathway Example: from Council/LGMA Leadership programs to Graduate Certificate



This approach has the advantage not only of incorporating existing programs and providers, but also of greatly reducing the total university fees that have to be paid by practitioners to receive a post-graduate qualification.

Note: because this is a *university graduate program*, supplementary assignments can be required before Recognition of Prior Learning can be granted, depending on how rigorously external programs are taught or mentored and assessed.

## Implementation of the Advancing Leadership Initiative in its first two years (2010-2012)

### New South Wales

- The Graduate Certificate in Local Government Leadership was launched in NSW by UTS's Centre for Local Government (UTS:CLG) in early 2011.
- *New Perspectives in Local Government Leadership* and *Local Government Leadership Personal and Professional Skills* have been delivered by UTS:CLG in 2011 and 2012.
- *Team Building and Leadership* was designed to run in conjunction with the 2012 LGMA Management Challenge and participants from councils across NSW completed the subject with UTS:CLG in May 2012.
- The *Community Leadership* subject was delivered by UTS:CLG in September 2012.
- The first cohort from NSW will complete and receive their Graduate Certificate with UTS in early 2013.
- ACELG in conjunction with UTS:CLG signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Randwick City Council in October 2012 whereby Randwick City Council staff completing internal learning and development programs will be given credits towards the Graduate Certificate at UTS.
- Similar MOU agreements are in discussion phase with two other NSW councils.
- UTS:CLG and Local Government Managers Australia-NSW (LGMA-NSW) are continuing discussions regarding developing partnership opportunities and the possible networking of LGMA-NSW development programs to the Graduate Certificate.

### Western Australia

- An introductory short course was piloted in Western Australia in 2010, in partnership with Edith Cowan University and LGMA-WA, and with support from WALGA.
- Edith Cowan University subsequently accredited a variant of the Graduate Certificate in Local Government Leadership within its Business School.
- Further work and program design discussions have taken place between ACELG, ECU, UTS:CLG and LGMA-WA with the launch of the WA version of the Graduate Certificate scheduled for 2013.

### Northern Territory

- In the Northern Territory, the delivery of all four subjects of the UTS Graduate Certificate in Local Government Leadership commenced in September 2011 as a one year part-time program.
- The course is offered in a partnership that includes ACELG, UTS:CLG, Charles Darwin University (CDU), and the NT Department of Local Government. The program has also received support from the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) and the NT branch of Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA).
- The first cohort from the Northern Territory will complete and receive their Graduate Certificates in early 2013

## South Australia

- In South Australia, the Graduate Certificate is being offered in a partnership that includes ACELG, UTS:CLG, LGMA SA and LGASA with plans to offer *New Perspectives in Local Government Leadership and Team Building and Leadership* in 2013.
- University of Adelaide joined the partnership whereby the UTS Graduate Certificate in Local Government Leadership is recognised as credits towards their own Graduate Diploma and MBA programs.
- An agreement has been made between LGMA-SA and University of Adelaide for the LGMA-SA Emerging Leaders and Professional Leaders programs to be recognised as credits towards University of Adelaide's Graduate and MBA programs.
- Discussions between ACELG and South Australian councils are underway to explore MOU possibilities whereby in-house leadership programs are recognised as credits towards the Graduate Certificate.

## Tasmania

- University of Tasmania (UTAS) joined the Advancing Leadership Initiative as a Tasmanian university partner in 2012.
- Discussions are continuing between UTAS, LGMA- TAS, UTS:CLG and ACELG exploring opportunities for a variant of the Graduate Certificate to be offered in Tasmania in 2013.

## Victoria and Queensland

Discussions have commenced with LGMA Divisions to explain the initiative and identify potential university partners and collaboration opportunities.

## Joining the Advancing Leadership Partnership

The partnership is open to local government organisations that are willing to be active participants in a national network of best practice innovators in local government leadership development, focused on aspiring leaders and emerging talent.

The intention of the partnership is not to duplicate or cut across existing programs or frameworks but to strengthen common purposes. Partners are committed to evolving the Advancing Leadership Framework as a consistent national developmental tool *specifically for local government*, are flexible with sharing ideas and resources (subject to reasonable intellectual property constraints), are innovative in the creation of linkages across different programs and providers, and are open to creating pathways to graduate programs across Australia.

ACELG wishes to expedite further implementation of the initiative through discussions with LGMA Divisions, local government associations and individual councils or regional organisations. The aim in each case will be to identify university partners that can deliver the Graduate Certificate, establish partnership arrangements, and incorporate suitable existing programs and activities. Once a local or state agreement that meets the Advancing Leadership objectives has been finalised, ongoing development and implementation will be a matter for the partners concerned.

The inaugural Advancing Leadership roundtable will take place in November 2012, and ACELG will continue to convene periodic national meetings for exchanges of information and experience based on ongoing feedback from partners.

**For further information, please go to [www.acelg.com.au](http://www.acelg.com.au) or email [Sophi.Bruce@uts.edu.au](mailto:Sophi.Bruce@uts.edu.au) or phone 02 9514 7867**