



COUNCILS IN FOCUS

Local Government Information Framework

In its Inquiry into Local Government Costs and Efficiency the South Australian Productivity Commission (SAPC) made a number of recommendations to the State Government and advice to councils regarding information for improved decision making and efficiency and continuous improvement.

The SAPC recommended that the South Australian Government establish a broad information framework, with a range of indicators published online, to enable high level comparisons of councils, including with themselves over time. The information framework would provide councils with information to support decision making and continuous improvement and provide communities and ratepayers with consistent information about their council performance and productivity, including comparisons with appropriate councils.

The Government supported the establishment of an information framework for the local government sector with a suite of key financial and other performance indicators to provide accurate comparative performance information to councils and their communities.

The Local Government Information Framework (LGIF) is being developed by the Office of Local Government as a business reporting tool that will compile key information and data about the performance of South Australian councils, to deliver two key outcomes—

1. **Councils in Focus**—a publicly accessible online website that clearly identifies, explains and presents comparative information on functions delivered by all councils over time, in a way that captures attention, makes information easy to understand, and supports engagement between councils and ratepayers.
2. **Reports to Councils**—the provision of key data and reports to the local government sector to support councils' business decision making and strategic planning.

Councils in Focus

The Councils in Focus website will be a snapshot of our State's local government sector. It will bring together a range of information about South Australian local council services, operations and performance in one place and will help communities gain a better understanding of how their council works.

What will Councils in Focus deliver?

The intent of the Councils in Focus website is to both provide more information about councils' expenditure and revenue decisions to ratepayers and communities. It will allow ratepayers to search for their local council and access a range of high level information on:

- How councils receive revenue — what rates are charged, what grants are received and other sources of funding.
- Specific information about amounts received from rates, including general rates and different rating categories and information that shows rate changes in relation to the change in the number of rateable properties in a council over time.
- What councils spend their money on — key services such as roads, libraries, waste management and other functions.
- Each council's financial position and performance.

Information will be provided for each of South Australia's 68 councils for a five year period, and will enable the community to compare a council to similar councils and to council averages across the State, over time.

The '[Local Government Information Framework – Council in Focus report overview](#)' document details the information that will be collated by the LGIF, its source, and how a selection of this information will be made available on Councils in Focus.

The Government has made information on Councils in Focus available for public consultation on the YourSAy website: yoursay.sa.gov.au/councils-in-focus-website

This includes information for members of the public on Councils in Focus, including a concept of the website design, and providing a number of questions in a survey to facilitate comments at this stage.

Council Says

Councils in Focus will allow each council to provide their views and feedback on the data, through a 'Council Says' feature on the website. Each council will be able to include comments about the information shown about it to be displayed on the website, prior to and after the website's launch. Please note that these comments will not be edited for content as the intent is to allow councils to communicate directly with website users through this mechanism (although any potentially defamatory or offensive statements may be removed).

More information about how councils can provide their 'Council Says' comments will be provided to councils closer to the launch of Councils in Focus, so that these comments are included when the website 'goes live'.

Reports to Councils

While the high-level information in Councils in Focus will be available to everyone, the LGIF as a whole has been designed to enable more detailed information to be provided for councils' benefit.

Reports to Councils will put a different lens on the LGIF and provide councils with access to more granular detailed information through reports in a range of areas. Reports to Councils will be provided to councils to help with benchmarking and internal analysis and can also be able to compare their own performance over time and with other councils.

The development of these reports is being guided by a reference group that brings together a range of people from the local government sector.

Where will the information come from?

LGIF will not undertake its own data collection but will draw upon existing reliable and comparable data sources. Key information will be sourced primarily through existing South Australian Local Government Grants Commission (SALGGC) data collection systems. The SALGGC has been collecting this data for the past 15 years.

The data for Councils in Focus will be sourced from several places, including:

- the South Australian Local Government Grants Commission will be the chief source of information, principally information provided through councils' supplementary returns.
- each council's annual business plan and budget
- other sources used by the Grants Commission, including the Office of the Valuer-General and the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

At this stage, it is anticipated that the information in LGIF will be renewed when updated (and verified) Grants Commission information is available; and when councils' annual business plans have been adopted.

The LGIF content document attached provides greater details on the information that will be collated, its source, and what information will be included on the Councils in Focus website for your comments.

Have your say

As noted above, the YourSAy website includes a number of questions for members of the public to consider when they are making a submission. These may also be of use to your Council. However, as this project is critical to the local government sector, we understand that your Council may have more detailed feedback, including comments on the data that is the basis of the reporting, on the potential forms or content of the reports for councils, or ideas for future additional reporting mechanisms.

The document outlining the proposed LGIF content poses some additional questions that may assist your Council to consider a submission on the LGIF.

Please provide submissions to the Office of Local Government at by 5 pm 16 July 2021.

Submission can be emailed to DIT.LocalGovernmentReform@sa.gov.au

