WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY
2025–2029

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Draft

Commencement Date   1 July 2025

Council Department   General Manager's Office

Contact Officer   Manager-Human Resources

Revision Required   Every 4 Years

<u>Policy Review</u>

This policy shall be reviewed at four (4) intervals at least, to ensure it meets all statutory requirements and the needs of council. It may also be reviewed at other times as determined by council.

<u>Revision History</u>

Version	Council Meeting Date	Resolution No.	Responsible Officer
1	25 June 2012	155/2012	Manager - Human Resources
2	26 June 2017	171/2017	Manager - Human Resources
3	26 September 2022	189/2022	Manager - Human Resources
4	23 June 2025		Manager – Human Resources

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1.   Executive Statement

As Council plans for the future of our Shire and works to deliver the outcomes outlined in the Community Strategic Plan, careful consideration is given to both current resourcing capacity and future needs.

To support this, Council has developed a suite of integrated long-term plans that outline how we will be resourced over the next ten years. These plans are built around key components of our resourcing capability, namely our assets, financial position and outlook, existing and emerging technologies and Human Resources.

The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) framework provides a structure for regularly reviewing these resourcing strategies alongside updates to the Community Strategic Plan, ensuring alignment and reaction to change. As part of this framework, the Workforce Management Strategy outlines Council's projected workforce requirements, identifies external labour market challenges, and details the strategies in place to build capability, support organisational goals, and deliver on the priorities of our 2025–2029 Delivery Program.
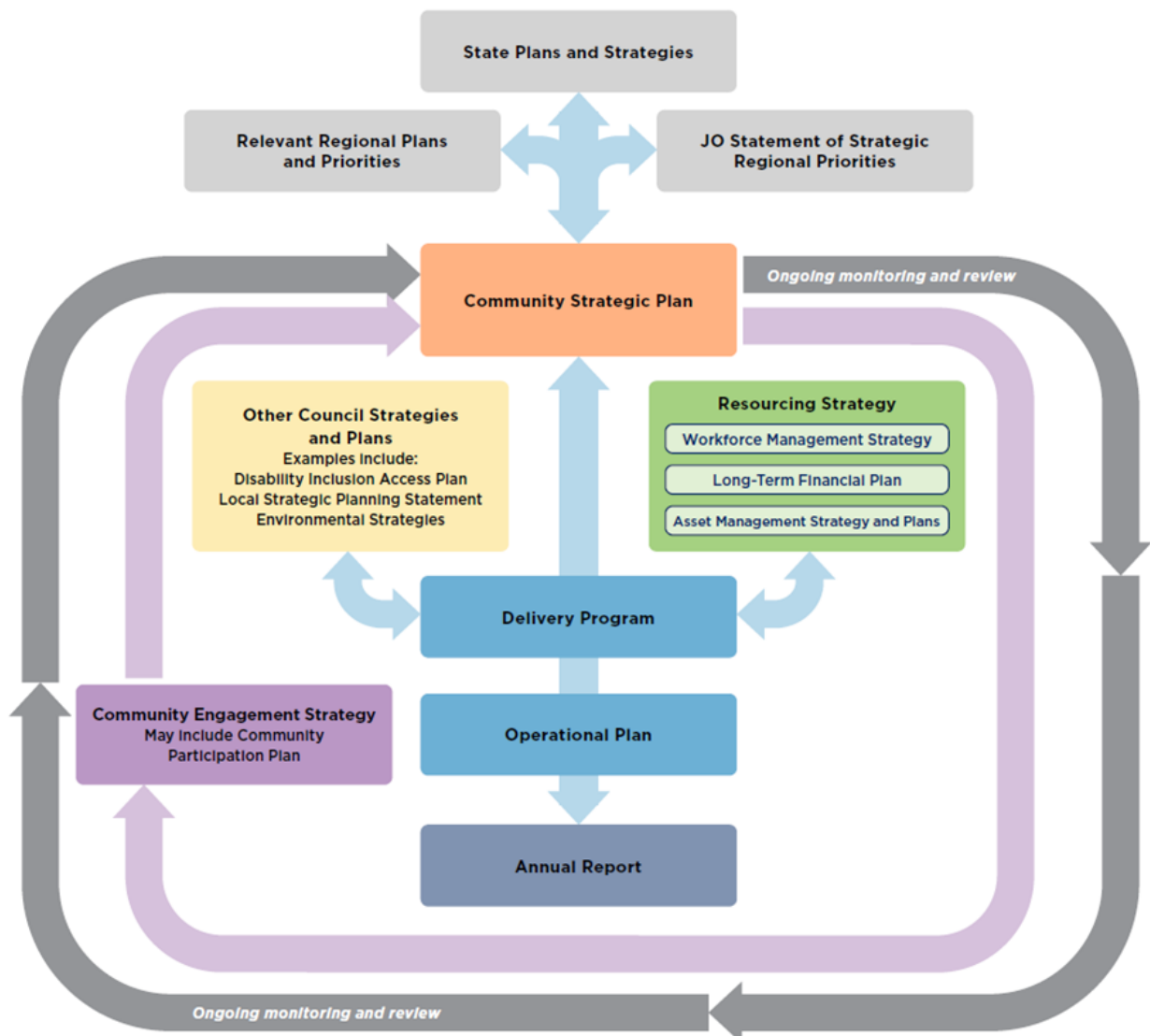
2. Current Workforce Profile

2.1 Council's Organisation Structure

General Manager's Office
- Business liaison
- Civic relationships
- Citizenship
- Communications
- Festival of International Understanding
- Grants co-ordination
- Human Resources
- Integrated Planning and Reporting
- Work, Health and Safety

Environmental Services Department
- Building certification & development compliance inspections
- Companion animals, ranger services
- Development assessment & control
- Environmental protection & regulation
- Public and environmental health regulation & food safety inspections
- Heritage advice & assessment
- Plumbing & drainage regulation & on-site sewage management assessment & inspections
- Strategic land-use planning
- Subdivision certification
- Rural addressing
- Zoning & building information certificates

Corporate Services Department
- Accounts payable & receivable
- Civic Centre
- Library
- Art Gallery
- Community projects
- Cultural & special events
- Customer service
- Financial planning
- Information technology
- Insurances
- Rates & water billing
- Records management
- Risk management
- Youth Council

Infrastructure & Operations Department
- Airport
- Asset management
- Aquatic Centre
- Biosecurity control (plants)
- Caravan Park
- Cemeteries
- Construction & maintenance of roads bridges & footpaths
- Council property management
- Engineering & technical design
- Fleet & depot operations
- Parks, gardens & reserves maintenance & beautification
- Saleyards
- State roads contract maintenance
- Waste management & recycling
- Wastewater treatment & reticulation
- Water treatment & reticulation

2.2   Snap Shot of our Workforce

As of 31 March 2025, Council's workforce consists of a total of 232 staff employed in a variety of capacities including fulltime, part-time, term contracts and 23 casuals. Statistics have been included from previous reports for comparison and does not include casuals.
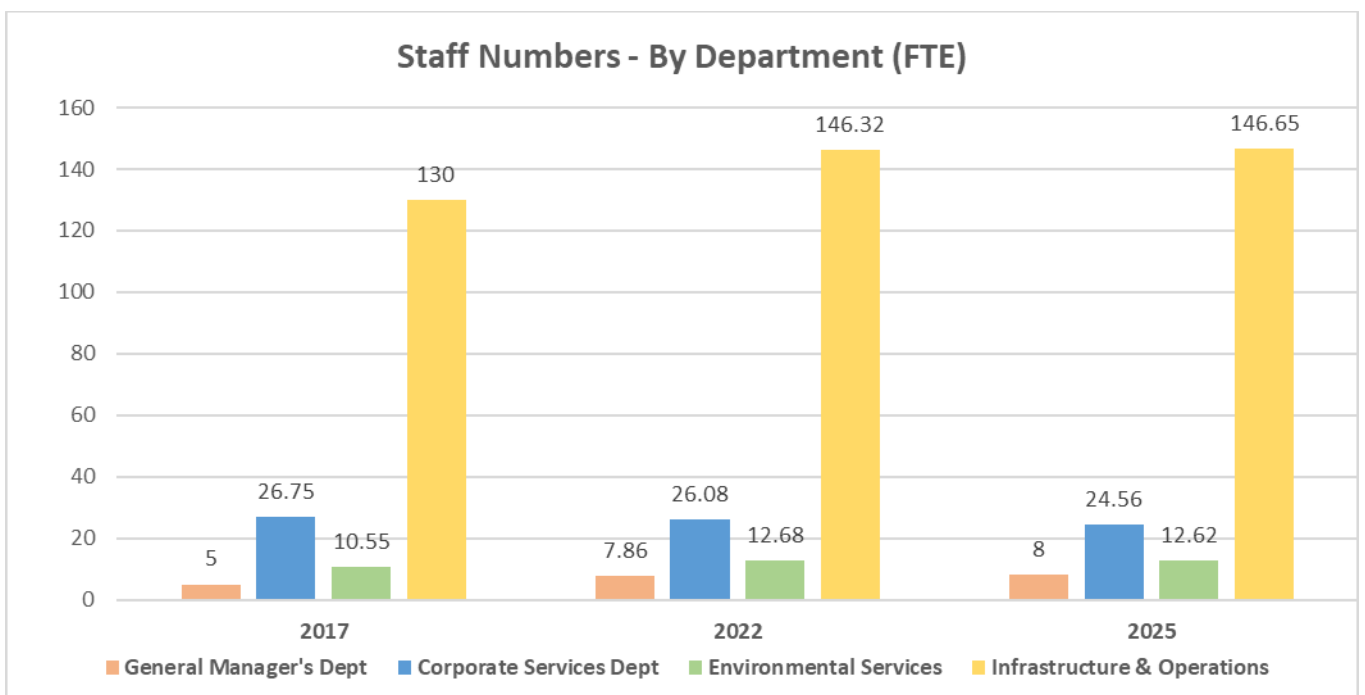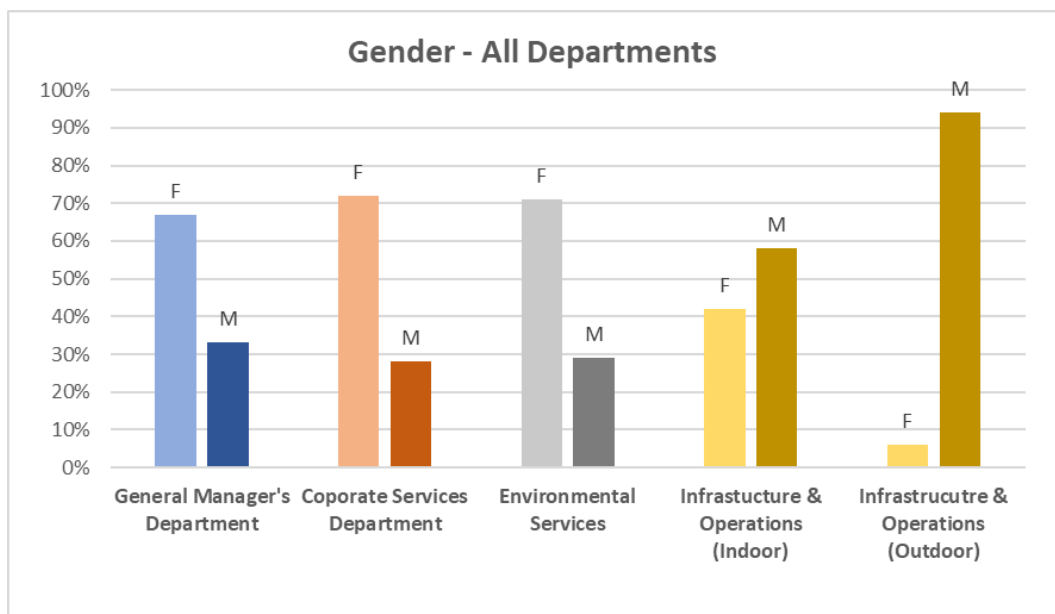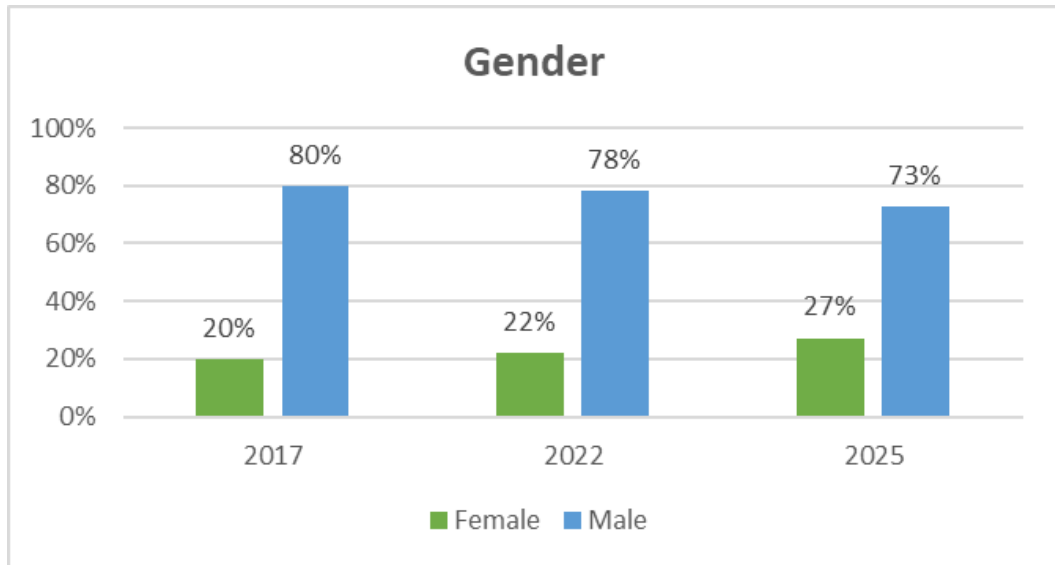
Gender

Gender - All Departments

Staff Numbers - By Department (FTE)
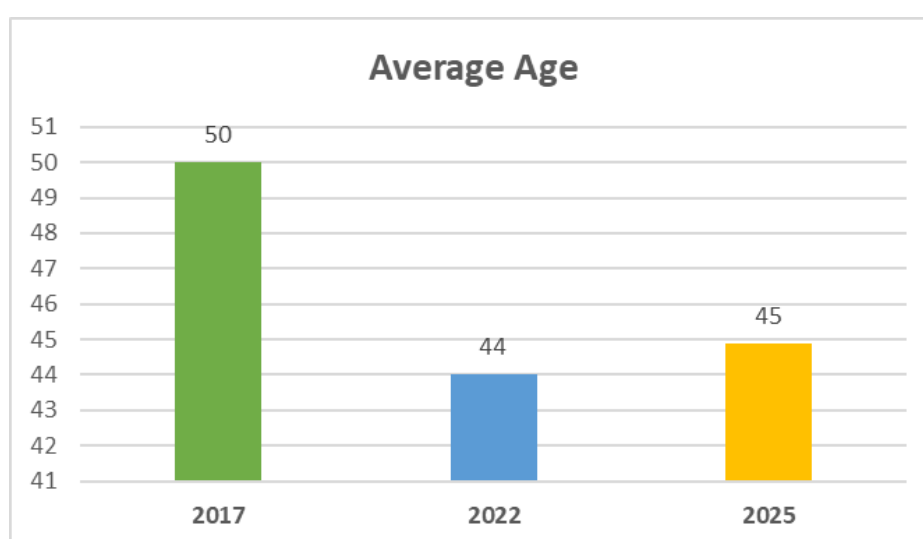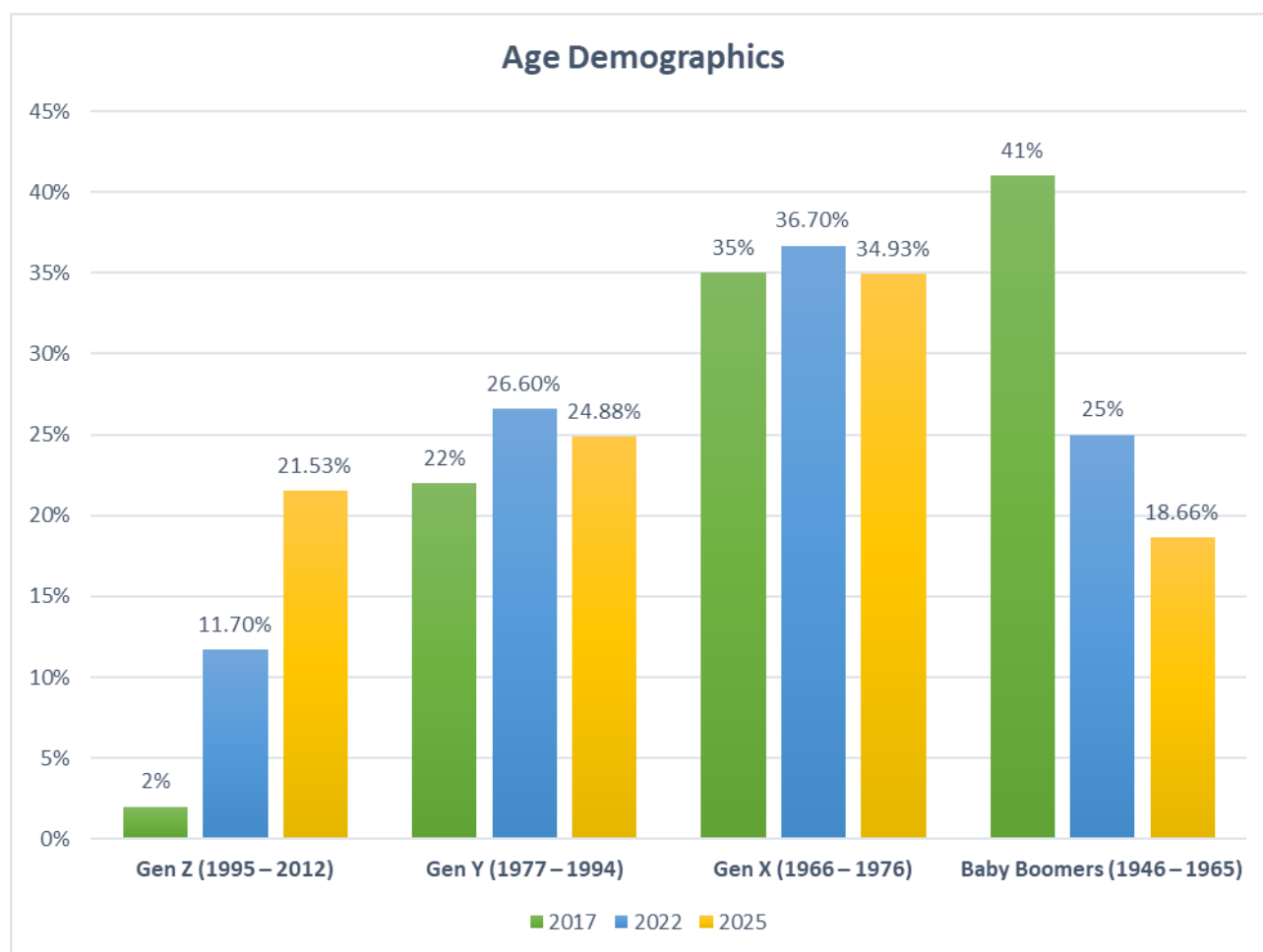
2.3   Indigenous Employees

Cowra Council currently has 8 employees who identify as Indigenous.

2.4   Council manages the workforce activities throughout the employee lifecycle.

2.5   All Departments – Length of Service
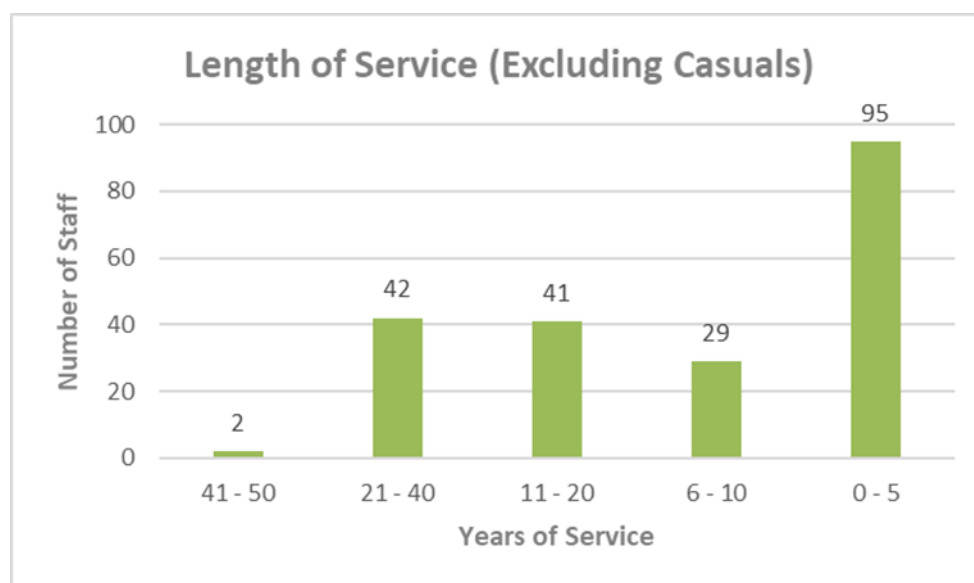
2.6   Cowra Council's Total Workforce

The organisational structure as at 31 March 2025 comprises of 191.83 full-time equivalent (total FTE) employees across four Departments. This figure includes Trainees and Apprentices, but does not include casuals working at the Civic Centre.

The following table provides an overview of Council's workforce and identifies by Department and sections, the current number of full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) based on a 35-hour week for indoor staff and 38 hours for outdoor staff.

Department	Permanent (FTEs)	Term Contracts (FTEs)	Casuals (FTEs)	Total (FTEs)
General Managers Department				
Executive		1		1
Executive Administration	1			1
Business	1			1
Grants & Executive Projects	1			1
Communications	1			1
Human Resources/WHS	3			3
Total	**7**	**1**		**8**
Corporate Services				
Executive		1		1
Administration	1.5		.05	1.55
Community Development	1.06			1.06
Art Gallery	2.02			2.02
Information Services & Records Management	5	.22		5.22
Finance/Payroll/Accounts/Rates/Water	8.32	.22		8.54
Customer Service	3			3
Civic Centre	2	.22	5.16	7.38
Total	**22.9**	**1.66**	**5.21**	**29.77**
Environmental Services				
Executive		1		1
Administration	1			1
Planning	4	1		5
Building & Regulatory	2.62	1		3.62
Ranger Services	2		.44	2.44
Total	**9.62**	**3**	**.44**	**13.06**
Infrastructure & Operations				
Executive		1		1
Administration	2.72		.06	2.78
Cowra Works	2	1		3
Cowra Works - Construction	23	.22		23.22
Cowra Works - Maintenance	20.6	.22		20.82
Cowra Works - Water & Sewer	20	.22		20.22
Cowra Services	2			2
Cowra Services - Depot/Workshop/Stores	7	2.22		9.22
Cowra Services - Parks & Gardens	16	3		19
Cowra Services - Biosecurity	2			2
Project Management			1.09	1.09
Cowra Services – Aerodrome, Cemeteries & Saleyards	6	.22		6.22
Cowra Services - Aquatic Centre				
Cowra Services – MRF	18	4.63	.5	23.13
Assets & Technical Services	10			10
RMCC	4.6			4.6
Total	**133.92**	**12.73**	**1.65**	**148.30**
Combined Total	**173.44**	**18.39**	**7.3**	**199.13**

3. Workforce Trends and Considerations 2025 - 2029

The review of the Workforce Management Strategy considers a variety of internal and external influences when projecting our future workforce requirements. Outlined below are the key factors we must consider to ensure our workforce planning aligns with, and effectively supports, the goals and objectives set out in Council's broader strategic plans.

3.1 Customer Value

The role of Council's human resources section is to provide support to the organisation to effectively and efficiently deliver our community services. Therefore, from a human resources perspective, our customers are our employees and leaders in the organisation.

The increasing competition for talent and our vision of an employer of choice drives us to continually improve our employee engagement, our employees' experience at work, our leaders' experience with working with human resources and our candidates' experience when applying for vacancies.

Through the human resources function, we will continue to have a focus on customer value, finding new, innovative and flexible ways to support the goals of the organisation.

Human Resources will liaise with staff and leadership to gather feedback, understand employee experience and identify gaps to ensure the workforce can meet service needs.

3.2 Candidate Experience

The expectations of technology and speed of process for candidates needs to be considered in our attraction strategy and processes. This will ensure we are reaching and engaging effectively with talented candidates, providing an experience for them aligned to our values and strongly competing for the best talent. Candidates increasingly have expectations of a faster, easier and accessible recruitment and selection process, including a seamless onboarding process.

3.3 Innovation, Technology and Change

As we live in an increasingly digital world, the tools we use to do our work, the delivery of services to our community and the expectations of the community for technology, innovation, online services and efficiencies continue to increase.

The impact of this on our workforce is the increased need for technical and specialist skills in the areas of technology and digital communications, skilled plant operators, technologically savvy employees and the increased need for leadership with skills to drive innovation and implement change. In doing this we need to provide a learning environment that supports employees in the transition.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is already starting to impact roles in local government. Some simple, repetitive tasks (like data entry, scheduling, communication) can be done quicker and efficiently with AI, use of this new technology is a huge change. We will ensure our staff are supported through these changes, with clear communication, training, and involvement in how AI can be used and introduced in the workplace. Our workforce planning will include ways to upskill current staff and attract new talent with the right skills for the future.

3.4   The Competition for Talent

We are operating in a highly competitive talent market, where larger councils often attract candidates with more generous salary packages and broader career pathways. Additionally, we face strong competition from the private sector and State Government agencies, which can offer similar advantages.

In areas such as planning and building, many professionals are choosing to become independent consultants, leveraging current skills shortages to increase their earnings with minimal risk. Similarly, industries like transport and mining, though they may not provide the same work-life balance, offer significantly higher wages, making them appealing to skilled workers such as plant operators and mechanics.

Across the sector, there continues to be a critical shortage of professionals, particularly in engineering, finance, planning, and building certification. To address this, we need to consider both short and long-term strategies, including initiatives such as cadetships, more flexible working arrangements and employee benefits to attract and retain the talent we need.

3.5   Flexible Work Practices

Flexible work practices are a component of our competitive advantage to attract and retain talent and will continue to be reviewed to identify value to both employees and the organisation in delivering our services

Staff demographics and succession planning will continue to be of importance to provide flexible work practices to support phased retirement plans. This strategy also allows us to mitigate the risk of losing corporate knowledge and supports the organisation to transfer knowledge, whilst supporting the wellbeing of our employees.

Working from home provides an opportunity for employees to experience a better work-life balance, improve productivity and increase job satisfaction. Workers who are more satisfied with their jobs will increase retention rates, retaining skilled and valuable employees. Flexibility to allow working from home and indeed in other locations eg Sydney, provides an attraction to potential skilled candidates.

3.6   Diversity and Inclusion

Council recognises the importance of building a diverse workforce that reflects the backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of the community we serve. We are committed to strengthening our recruitment and selection practices to attract, hire, and retain a workforce that is inclusive and representative.

This includes creating equitable opportunities, removing potential barriers to employment, and promoting accessibility and cultural awareness throughout the organisation. We will also continue to foster an inclusive workplace culture where all employees feel respected, supported, and empowered to contribute to their full potential.

3.7   Risk Management

Council maintains a strong commitment to performance management in the areas of safety and risk, and this will remain a key focus. Our enterprise risk management framework will continue to be reviewed, refined, and embedded across all areas of Council to ensure that both operational and strategic risks are proactively identified, monitored, and mitigated.

As we plan for the future, we must recognise and manage a range of emerging and ongoing workforce-related risks and challenges, including:

- The current workforce does present a risk of losing critical corporate knowledge and experience if not addressed through effective succession planning and knowledge transfer strategies.

- A shift in expectations from younger employees, who are more likely to seek diverse experiences across multiple roles and disciplines throughout their careers.

- Increasing community expectations and demand for higher levels of service, which places additional pressure on the capacity and capability of our existing workforce.

- Ongoing skills shortages, particularly in professional fields such as accounting, engineering, regulatory services, building certification, and town planning.

- The accelerating pace of technology development, which impacts both service delivery and workforce capability requires continual upskilling and adaptability.

- Financial constraints that demand doing more with fewer resources, requiring greater efficiency, innovation, and strategic workforce planning.

- Ongoing obligations to meet Work Health and Safety (WHS) legislation and regulatory compliance, ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for all employees.

- The effective management of workers' compensation claims to support employee wellbeing and reduce operational impact.

- Strengthening leadership capability and investing in change management will also be vital to supporting staff through future challenges and opportunities.

3.8   Employee Remuneration

To be an employer of choice within the local government sector, Cowra Council must continue to regularly review and benchmark its remuneration practices to ensure competitiveness in an increasingly active talent market. Competitive salary offerings, when combined with a compelling suite of employee benefits, are essential to attracting, engaging, and retaining the skilled workforce needed to maintain and enhance our service delivery.

Our current employee benefit offerings include a strong focus on health and wellbeing, flexible work arrangements that support work-life balance, and robust learning and development opportunities are key. To maximise their impact, these benefits must be proactively communicated and promoted as part of a clear and consistent employer brand.

3.9   Building Capability through Learning and Development

We remain committed to strengthening leadership capability, enhancing operational skills, and fostering a culture of high performance across Council. Supporting the professional growth and development of our workforce is essential to maintaining service excellence and ensuring we are well positioned to meet both current and future challenges.

We will continue to assess and respond to the evolving learning and development needs of our employees, ensuring their skills, qualifications, and competencies align with our operational priorities and long-term strategic goals. At the same time, we recognise the importance of providing all employees with equitable access to learning opportunities that support personal growth, career progression and job satisfaction.

Our approach to learning and development is guided by a structured strategy that includes individual development plans, training needs analysis, and ongoing evaluation. This ensures that learning initiatives

are both targeted and effective, contributing to workforce capability, succession planning, and continuous improvement across the organisation.

4. Supporting Strategies

4.1 Attraction and Retention Strategy

Introduction
The importance of attracting and retaining talent continues to be an important factor to deliver quality services to our community. The challenge of doing so is increasing with ongoing competition with the private sector as business activity, headcount and salaries increase, the escalating speed of technology and changing expectations of candidates.

It is important our Workforce Management Strategy includes our approach to address these issues.

There are a range of programs needed to address this issue and these programs will deliver on the key actions below.

Strategic Objectives

Objective 1 – Attract Candidates
Attract and retain quality candidates

Key Actions:
- Continue to strengthen our employer branding and presence by promoting our opportunities, working conditions, wellbeing programs, flexible work practices and learning and development programs.
- Continuously improve our recruitment and onboarding processes to focus on candidate experience and customer value.
- Review and benchmark our total rewards and benefits packages.
- Continuously coach and develop capability for strong and strategic recruitment decision making.
- Continue to promote Council as an employee of choice through advertising and circulating our recently completed promotional video.
- Continue to consider opportunities to recruit trainees, apprentices and professional cadets.
- Implement recruitment strategies to attract and retain target groups identified in the EEO Management Plan.

Objective 2 – Embrace Technology
Implement technology and system innovations

Key Actions:
- Improve technology capability for data management, workforce management planning and reporting.
- Investigate and establish new ways of reaching and engaging with potential candidates and current employees.
- Continuously improve the annual performance review process for meaningful career development conversations and performance.
- Review and align our job evaluation process to ensure internal and external consistency
- Continually review and evaluate our workplace policies to ensure it is a fair workplace whose policies are modern, reasonable and easy to understand.
- As AI becomes more common, ensure our staff are equipped with the required digital skills. We will provide training in areas like using AI tools, managing data, and working alongside smart systems. Supporting staff through clear communication with opportunities to be involved in shaping how AI is used.

Objective 3 – Promote Employee Health and Wellbeing

Cowra Council has a range of health and wellbeing programs including immunisation programs for at-risk employees, skin checks for employees, pre-employment medical examinations, fitness for work examinations, flu vaccination clinics, annual health checks and other programs from time to time.

These wellbeing programs are a Council initiative for a resilient, motivated, healthy and productive culture.

Key actions:

- Continue to enhance the wellbeing of employees with ongoing events and programs eg all staff barbecues, health checks, flu vaccinations, skin checks, health monitoring for identified staff.
- Continue to monitor the fitness for work where required following workplace injury or non-workplace injuries.
- Deliver psychological resilience development to support positive psychology awareness in the Council.
- Continue the Employee Assistance Program providing counselling support for all employees of Council which includes onsite counselling services.
- Continue to develop the Health & Wellbeing Reimbursement Program for employees.

Responsibility

Management responsibilities are:

- Support the ongoing improvement and strengthening of the recruitment and selection process towards best practice and candidate experience.
- Ensure policy and process are followed to meet legal requirements and merit-based decisions.
- Participate in and support their leaders to complete training to be skilled in best practice recruitment and selection processes and decision making.
- Actively support employee engagement activities.
- Demonstrate and support development of leadership at all levels.

Human Resources responsibilities are:

- Identify and implement ongoing improvements to the recruitment and selection process.
- Provide support, coaching and training for leaders in best practice recruitment and selection practices.
- Proactively identify opportunities to promote our employer brand to attract quality candidates.
- Design, implement and continuously improve reward and recognition programs.
- Identify and take advantage of opportunities to add value and strategically advise the organisation with workforce data.
- Lead the implementation of technology and innovation to achieve attraction and retention objectives.
- Review workforce policies.

4.2 Learning and Development Strategy

Introduction

The Learning and Development Strategy focuses on employee development, skill-building and enhancing service delivery to the community. The Strategy details the programs to support the development needs within the resourcing strategy 2025 - 29.

Strategic Objectives

Objective 1 – Develop Skills and Capability

Develop knowledge, skills and capability through the delivery of the learning and development strategy

Key actions:

- Provide development opportunities for growth in all competencies detailed for each role.
- Deliver courses with flexible options wherever possible and package and deliver programs when requested to meet the needs of specific teams and organisational goals.
- Enhance reporting available on learning histories and progress against learning and development plans.
- Facilitate participation in specific professional development and networking opportunities.
- Develop and implement a staff Educational Assistance Policy.

Objective 2 – Develop Leadership

Develop leadership capability and support a high-performance culture through leadership development

Key actions:

- Implement leadership development programs to support capability building and leadership pipeline.
- Manage programs for emerging and developing leaders to develop capabilities through learning from others either within Cowra Council or other councils, such as mentoring, shadowing, and coaching.
- Support participation in industry leadership events.
- Promote participation in and leadership of cross functional projects by emerging and developing leaders.
- Support resources and programs to induct new leaders and managers.
- Support the implementation of 360 feedback and coaching for managers and executive.

Objective 3 – Enhance Customer Services

Customer service plays a central role in delivering on our strategic goals as outlined in our delivery program.

Key actions:

- Embed a customer focused culture, ensure all staff, regardless of role recognise their contribution to delivering high-quality customer service.
- Develop and implement a customer service charter outlining expected service standards across the organisation.
- Provide ongoing customer service training and development.
- Include specialised training for frontline staff, including handling difficult conversations and cultural awareness.
- Leadership programs will reinforce customer service excellence as a strategic priority.
- We will foster a culture of continuous improvement by encouraging innovation and staff-driven initiatives to enhance customer service
- Establish a cross-departmental customer service working group to share best practices and address challenges.

Responsibility

Employees' responsibilities are to:

- Develop their learning and development plan during their annual Performance Review
- Implement and share the skills and competencies obtained during development opportunities.
- Take action to develop and apply new skills in the workplace.
- Actively participate in learning opportunities, including a combination of learning methods (formal, from others, and from experience).
- Complete evaluation forms as requested for any learning and development initiative.
- Advise their supervisor/manager and human resources if they are unable to attend scheduled training or there are changes to their learning and development plan.

Supervisors' responsibilities are to:
- Identify skill gaps and help target development needs of their team.
- Assist in the implementation of learning on the job initiatives by providing coaching, feedback, and development opportunities.
- Anticipate potential barriers to learning and plan how to overcome them.
- Ensure employees are available to attend scheduled training and provide confirmation of non-attendance (and provide a replacement if applicable).
- Support opportunities for application of new skills in the workplace.
- Support opportunities for progressive application of new skills and agreed measures for progress.

Management responsibilities are to:
- Support opportunities for application of new skills in the workplace.
- Provide learning opportunities (formal, from others and from experience) that will enable employees to progressively develop.
- Identify and remove potential barriers to learning.
- Create a clear understanding of the importance of the implementation and completion of employees learning and development plans.
- Promote and implement targeted learning and development programs and initiatives within each department as required.
- Collaborate with human resources to ensure successful achievement of organisational development goals.

Human Resources responsibilities are to:
- Develop and provide a suite of programs each financial year based on corporate priorities and the learning needs of our employees.
- Provide flexible, enjoyable and safe learning experiences.
- Facilitate succession planning through a variety of means including trainees, cadets, apprenticeships, targeting key areas and the development of existing and potential leaders through leadership development programs.
- Communicate the availability of learning programs and initiatives through a variety of mediums.
- Seek and incorporate employee feedback to continuously improve our programs and processes.
- Provide reports on learning and development undertaken.

4.3   Risk and Safety Strategy

Introduction
The Risk and Safety Strategy details the strategies that will be implemented during the term of the current Delivery Program.

The purpose of this Strategy is to increase awareness and commitment to Risk and Safety within the Council's workforce. The aim is to build, implement and achieve Risk and Safety excellence by providing minimum harm through a culture that ensures the safety of Council's workforce.

Strategic Objectives

Objective 1 - Workplace health and safety culture
Embed workplace health and safety as a core value in the workforce to support effective and positive workplace health and safety performance outcomes, which will continue to build strong relationships within all departments of Council.

Key actions:
- Report incidents as soon as possible, with a blame free culture supported through the entire workforce.

- Managers and Supervisors actively participate in risk and safety programs and consultation.
- Maintain a workforce in full compliance with mandatory workplace health and safety competencies and licences.
- Ensuring the workforce have the training and awareness to perform effectively in their roles.
- Fully inform the workforce about expected workplace health and safety behaviours, responsibilities and performance expectations.

Objective 2 – Systems, Policies and processes

Ensure workplace, health and safety training management systems provide Council with the required procedural guidance and tools to manage the health and safety of workers.

Ensure best safety practices in the management of health and safety risks and/or environmental impacts upon Council workers and worksites.

Key actions:
- Ensure implementation of an effective incident reporting and investigation system.
- Ensure polices, standard operating procedures and other documentation is accurate and current.
- Monitor compliance with workplace health and safety management systems, all related policies, procedures and initiatives across all divisions of the Council.
- Minimise SafeWork NSW notifiable incidents and introduce control measures to enhance workplace health and safety education awareness, involvement and compliance across all departments.

Objective 3 - Workers Compensation, Work Injuries and Illnesses

To reduce occupational injuries and illnesses through continued application of injury management and prevention programs and proactive management of cases where injury has occurred.

Key actions:
- Maintain 100 per cent compliance with workers compensation insurance timelines for incident reporting, resulting in no excess payments.
- Aim to achieve an actual total claim cost below the industry average and a reduced actual total day lost measure. This will be maintained through continual liaison with key stakeholders, including, workers compensation insurer, medical practitioners, return to work co-ordinators, managers, supervisors and injured workers.
- Have in place health surveillance for at risk workers.
- Continue to improve lost time injury statistics.

Objective 4 - Risk Management Framework

Cowra Council has an enterprise risk register to record, monitor and review organisational risks across the organisation. The risk register is continuously reviewed and updated.

Key actions:
- Continue to implement the risk register and critical control measures across all departments of the Council.
- Continue ongoing risk identification for workplace, health and safety risks that require attention and implementation of critical control measures by the department.
- Scope and implement control measures for emerging risks.
- Continue toolbox talks and other educational strategies for safety risks and environmental impacts.

Responsibility
Employee responsibilities are to:
- Ensure they practice due care in accordance with legal requirements and workplace, health and safety training.

- Ensure they assist officers in carrying out due diligence as per legal requirements.
- Ensure they notify a supervisor about any incident/illness/unsafe work practice.
- Actively participate in workplace health and safety training

Supervisors' responsibilities are to:
- Ensure they practice due care as per legal requirements and workplace health and safety training.
- Participate in workplace health and safety training.
- Proactively manage workplace health and safety issues within their control or escalate to manager.
- Provide toolbox talks and/or other means of communication on workplace health and safety issues.
- Support workplace health and safety training of staff.
- Undertake risk assessments as required and take appropriate actions.
- Immediately advise managers of any unsafe work practices.

Manager/Executive responsibilities are to:
- Ensure all staff, themselves included, have attended workplace health and safety training.
- Ensure their department's risks have been assessed and there are appropriate control measures implemented.
- Ensure implementation of and compliance with workplace health and safety management systems, policies and procedures in their department.
- Immediately advise managers of any unsafe work practices.

5. Measuring and Monitoring Performance against the Workforce Management Strategy

We will measure the impact of our strategies, the progress of our programs against these issues, and the Workforce Management Strategy themes in the following areas:

- Workforce data is accurate and accessible for strategic decision-making
- Employee engagement survey
- Community Satisfaction Survey
- Delivery of human resources programs/initiatives within budget
- Minimise recruitment time
- Turnover rate
- Workforce diversity statistics
- Merit-based selection principles applied for recruitment decisions
- Annual performance review completion within timeframe
- Induction program completed by all new employees
- Satisfaction rating and participation rates of learning and development programs
- Compliance with mandatory workplace health and safety requirements
- Actual workers compensation total claim performance rate will be below industry average
- Participation and satisfaction rates for health and wellbeing programs

6. Workforce Management Strategy Summary 2025-2029

Cowra Council remains committed to implementing proactive, measurable, and forward-looking workforce strategies that support the development of a sustainable, skilled, and high-performing workforce. This Workforce Management Strategy has been designed to be both flexible and responsive, aligning closely with Council's broader strategic priorities and integrating with other adopted plans.

The Plan ensures that the necessary workforce resources are in place to effectively deliver on the objectives of the current Delivery Program and to meet the evolving needs of the community, as identified in the Cowra Shire Community Strategic Plan. It also provides a framework for long-term workforce sustainability by anticipating future demands and positioning Council to respond positively to change.