

Democracy and Governance Support Working Party Terms of Reference

Introduction

1. SOLGM is a national membership organisation. Our vision is “*professional local government management, leading staff and enabling communities to shape their future*”. SOLGM exists to build capability within the local government sector, and to provide sector leadership in the issues of relevance to local government professionals.
2. In undertaking its core businesses SOLGM relies on the input of local government professionals to help it:
 - identify the training and professional development opportunities and good practice that build the capability of the local government sector; and
 - provide technical and policy advice to support SOLGM’s sector leadership activity.

Purpose

1. The purpose of the SOLGM Democracy and Governance Support Working Party (DGS) is to
 - a. Assist the local government sector to achieve high standards in the conduct of democracy services and governance support activity
 - b. assist the local government sector to achieve high standards in the planning, management and conduct of elections and polls under the Local Electoral Act 2001
 - c. in conjunction with other agencies, enhance public understanding of the role of local democracy within New Zealand’s system of governance, and public participation of local democracy

Scope

- 4 In promoting its purpose DGS shall focus on:
 - a. identifying and promoting leading practice in democracy and governance support (including the management of local government elections and polls)
 - b. assisting local authorities, electoral officers and democracy/governance support staff to meet the requirements of the Local Government Act, Local Electoral Act, LGOIMA and any other associated statutes and regulations and
 - c. identifying policy and practice issues relating to the conduct of the democracy services and electoral functions and developing appropriate responses from a managerial and operational perspective

- d. working with other agencies on programmes or projects that build community understanding of, and capacity to participate in, the local democratic process - including effective means for building the capacity of Māori to contribute to, and encouraging the participation of Māori in, these processes
- e. working with other agencies to promote participation in the local democratic process
- f. negotiating terms of purchase for election related services on behalf of the sector, including price and service delivery standards.

Responsibilities

6. In giving effect to its purpose DGS shall be specifically responsible for:
 - a. monitoring the environment within which local authorities operate for relevant issues impacting on the democracy and governance support function including proposed legislative change and developments in overseas jurisdictions
 - b. preparing and presenting submissions representing local government sector concerns from a management and operational perspective to appropriate organisations and Ministers
 - c. providing advice to local authorities and Electoral Officers on issues within its area of focus. This may involve the preparation of good practice guidance, tools and training
 - d. participate in programmes that build community understanding of, and capacity to contribute to the local democratic process
 - e. participate in or undertake national programmes to help promote awareness of and participation in local elections and polls, subject to the approval of the Chief Executive and
 - f. develop and maintain co-operative working relationships with the local government sector and other organisations that have related interests.

Accountability

7. DGS is accountable to the SOLGM Chief Executive, and may not undertake any action not in accordance with these terms of reference without the approval of the Chief Executive.
8. DGS must prepare a proposed annual work programme for consideration by the Chief Executive. That proposed work programme will include sufficient detail of financial, staffing, and consultancy needs to enable accurate costing of the proposals.

9. DGS must provide the Chief Executive with a report on its activities, at least once per year, or at other times as the Chief Executive determines. In turn, the Chief Executive will report to the Executive Committee.
10. DGS shall appoint a subcommittee that shall specifically focus on the conduct of local elections and related issues. Where practicable the Deputy Chair of DGS shall chair the electoral subcommittee.
11. Where the DGS or the Electoral Subcommittee undertakes actions as per paragraph 4(f) it shall ensure that these activities are taken at no risk to SOLGM, and with the full support of local authorities.

Powers

12. In fulfilling its purpose and responsibilities, DGS may;
 - a. appoint subcommittees to cover subject areas of particular interest
 - b. appoint working groups or teams
 - c. recommend the retention of specialist advisors to the Chief Executive of SOLGM for one-off projects.
13. In fulfilling its purpose and responsibilities, DGS must
 - a. ensure that its activities do not conflict with the policies and procedures of SOLGM
 - b. ensure that its advice meets any SOLGM standards for policy advice.

Membership

14. The SOLGM Executive may, at its discretion, appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair of Working Parties. All other working party members will be appointed or removed by the Chief Executive. Any vacancy on DGS may only be filled by the Chief Executive having first called for nominations from amongst the membership of SOLGM.
15. Members of DGS must be a full member of SOLGM. Members of any subcommittees or project teams need not be members of SOLGM. The appointment of members from outside the sector to a subcommittee (other than observers appointed under paragraph 15) will require the approval of the Chief Executive of SOLGM or their nominee.
16. Except as provided above, DGS may appoint and remove members to subcommittees or project teams as it sees fit
17. At its discretion, DGS may invite representatives from other organisations to attend meetings in an "observer" capacity. Observers will have speaking rights, but may not move or vote on recommendations. Participation in meetings by observers does not bind those organisations to any statement, submission or other release or publication, however issued, by the DGS and may not be taken as the position of any or all of the other participating organisations.

Review of Terms of Reference

18. DGS will review these Terms of Reference not less than once every three years. At this time it may make recommendations to the Chief Executive that it considers will ensure that DGS meets its purpose.
19. The Chief Executive may review these Terms of Reference at any time.