



University of  
South Australia

Business



CERM PI

# Local Government Organisational Culture Study

2025

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## Organisational Culture Study for Local Government – Project Overview

### INTRODUCTION

For more than thirty years, CERM PI, located within the UniSA Business division, has been a leader in benchmarking research focused on cultural performance, customer service quality, and operational management. Our team of internationally recognised management researchers provide detailed analysis and reports, enabling industry partners to develop and benefit from a culture of evidence-based decision-making that drives organisational performance improvement.

Since 2020, 27 councils from across Australia have participated in CERM PI's Organisational Culture Study, engaging in one- to three-year contracts. This has led to the development and refinement of a local government-specific research and reporting approach, better customised to the unique qualities, challenges, and values of the local government sector.

### BACKGROUND

In today's dynamic operating environment, local governments are expected to be adaptive, transparent and responsive to both internal and external pressures. Rapid policy changes, increasing community expectations and ongoing resource constraints require councils to develop and maintain an agile and resilient workforce. How ready and willing staff are to embrace change often reflects the underlying organisational culture. Some culture profiles support innovation and flexibility, while others (particularly local governments) tend to prioritise stability, tradition, and consistency.

### ORGANISTIONAL CULTURE STUDY BENEFITS

CERM PI's organisational culture studies have been helping Councils:

- Identify and understand the strengths and areas of growth for their workplace culture
- Tailor workforce development and staff engagement strategies
- Better understand how staff perceptions influence behaviour, service delivery, and organisational performance
- Gain independent, unbiased insight to support strategic and operational planning

### METRICS

The CERM PI Organisational Culture Study includes the following validated measures:

- **Organisational Culture** - Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI)
- **Organisational Climate** - measuring trust, recognition, fairness, support, innovation
- **Psychological Capital (PsyCap)** - measuring resilience, optimism, hope and self-efficacy
- **Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)** - assessing altruism, civic virtue, courtesy, sportsmanship and conscientiousness
- **Overall Satisfaction** measure
- **Open ended questions** – to deepen understanding of survey findings
- **Custom Questions** - tailored to council-specific values, strategic plans or local workforce initiatives

These tools can be used independently or in combination, allowing flexibility to meet the unique needs of your council.

While the culture and climate metrics directly measure the ‘personality’ and ‘pulse’ of the organisation, the OCB and PsyCap metrics may more indirectly assess how engaged, driven and willing staff are to the success of their organisation. Staff scoring high in OCBs and PsyCap are generally happier, more productive, committed and satisfied with their work and workplace. Including these metrics provides Council leadership with valuable diagnostic insights and helps identify potential drivers for positive change.

## FORMAT

Two surveys are offered in a 12-month period:

- Survey 1 – Main Study: A comprehensive survey with full analysis at the whole of organisation level and by subgroups (e.g., departments, tenure, gender, age) provided anonymity and statistical power (i.e, sufficient numbers in subgroups). This includes benchmarking where feasible.
- Survey 2 – Optional 6 – 9 month follow-up ‘pulse check’ survey (excluding culture due to its slower rate of change). Provides a snapshot to assess early impacts and progress from Survey 1.
- Participating councils can engage in a one-year or three-year study. The three-year option supports culture tracking and continuous improvement.

## AIMS

- Establish an organisational culture baseline (including checking for alignment with organisational values and industry)
- Assess staff engagement, workplace climate and satisfaction across departments and demographics to determine how strengths may be leveraged
- Understand how employee’s discretionary behaviours and mindsets contribute to individual and workplace wellbeing and service delivery to promote positive working environments where outcomes may be enhanced

## KEY BENEFITS

- Personalised service where we work closely with management to focus on the organisation’s needs in order to produce specific and relevant outcomes
- Independent, confidential data collection underpinned by academic rigour that enables Council’s to benchmark against reliable and tested cultural scores
- Longitudinal tracking of organisational culture to support transformation (particularly where longer-term study is chosen)
- Unique insights from benchmarking (where available) across participating councils
- Supports council efforts to listen and respond to staff and community expectations, concerns and needs
- Confidentiality of data ensured via the University’s ethics protocols to ensure alignment with public sector values of transparency and fairness.

## OUTCOMES

- Tailored, confidential and robust surveys that assess workplace culture and climate
- Summary reports with clear interpretation of findings

- Reduced risk of social desirability bias and more open responses through anonymous data collection
- Optional focus groups to enrich interpretation and support action planning
- Final presentation to senior executive to clearly explain findings (optional)
- Optional assistance disseminating findings to staff through summary documents, online briefings and workshops (incurs additional cost)

#### WHY COUNCILS WORK WITH CERM PI

- Turn feedback into action

**“We've introduced positive initiatives around communication, decision-making and staff wellbeing as a direct result of this collaboration.”**

— *Mark Irvin, Bega Valley Shire Council*

- Evidence-based workforce planning

**“We used their leadership program evaluation to assess its value and guide future planning.”**

— *Roberto Bria, City of Holdfast Bay*

#### CONTACT

For further information or to register your Council please contact:

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