

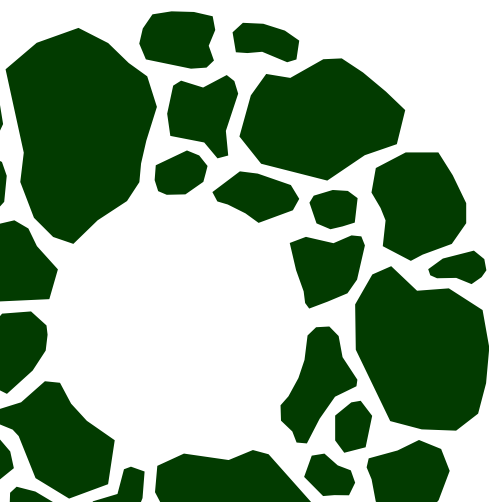


SOUTHERN
LIMESTONE
COAST
COUNCIL

ICT Strategic Framework 2025-2030

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Executive Summary

Technology is a constant, ever evolving landscape driven by innovation and encouraging change. Information Communication Technology stands at the forefront of business transformation. It continues to expand into all areas of Council and is essential to many aspects of daily operations.

The purpose of the ICT Strategic Framework is to define a comprehensive roadmap for the strategic use of Information and Communications Technology to support the Southern Limestone Coast Council's long-term strategic goals. This framework aims to improve operational efficiencies, enhance the delivery of services and encourage greater community engagement. It also ensures that high levels of data security and regulatory compliance are maintained. By investing in modern technologies, Council aims to become more responsive,

Strategic Alignment

This ICT Strategic Framework is aligned with the Southern Limestone Coast Council's focus to build "a strategic and financially sustainable Council that values its people and delivers quality services" as outlined in the Council goal in the Strategic Plan 2024-2025. The key objectives of this framework have been designed to support several strategic focus areas, including:

- **Website Review and Improvement:** Updating Council's online digital services, including transactions and applications to improve customer communication and services.
- **Software and Technology Upgrade:** Implement new software or technology solutions to improve workplace efficiency and flexibility and customer experience. This could be in areas such as financial, reporting, meeting or data management requirements, or for customer enquiries, applications or payments.

This ICT framework is designed to align technological initiatives with the Council's broader objectives, ensuring that digital transformation is not only a technical upgrade but also a strategic enabler of positive change across public services. The framework will help guide Council to harness new technologies that will enhance the services to residents, increase transparency, and improve collaboration with local stakeholders.

Introduction

Scope

This document is a strategic framework and not a strategic plan. It provides the key focus areas for Council in relation to ICT. It is not a technical document and is intended to provide a high-level overview of the current and future state of technology within Council.

The ICT Strategic Framework encompasses all aspects of technology within the Southern Limestone Coast Council, including the following key areas:

ICT Infrastructure and Technology: This includes the desktop hardware, networks, servers, cloud services and communication systems that form the backbone of Council's digital operations.

Business Systems and Applications: The framework covers the existing and future software platforms used by Council such as our Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software, GIS and other essential applications for internal and external operations.

Digital Transformation: A key focus area of the framework is the transformation of digital services offered to the community. This includes redevelopment of our website, an increase in our self-service online applications and other outward facing online services.

Cybersecurity and Business Continuity: The framework addresses the Council's approach to safeguarding data, ensuring compliance with data protection and cybersecurity frameworks, and protection against cyber threats. This also includes recovery and incident response plans.

The ICT Framework is designed to be flexible, with a vision for long-term growth while accommodating short-term goals and the evolving needs of the community. It will evolve in response to new technologies, changing demographics and emerging trends that affect local government and service delivery.

Current ICT Landscape

The current ICT landscape of the Southern Limestone Coast Council provides an important context for this framework. At present, the Council operates a mix of legacy systems and newer digital platforms, some of which are siloed or lack integration across different service areas. These systems are often characterised by:

Fragmented Infrastructure: The Council's network is made of several systems and networks, some of which are not fully optimized for scalability, security or interconnectivity.

Limited Cloud Adoption: While some services have been migrated to cloud platforms and Software as a Service solutions, many remain hosted on on-premises servers, limiting flexibility and increasing the complexity of managing ICT resources.

Inconsistent Digital Services: Many council services are available online but there are some that are still only accessible through in-person or paper-based processes.

Cybersecurity Challenges: With increasing cyber threats globally and growing amounts of sensitive data retained, there is an urgent need for Council to strengthen its cybersecurity posture and align with national frameworks.

Manual Processes and Limited Automation: Many processes within Council are still manual or semi-automated, leading to inefficiencies, delays and errors.

Data Management and Integration Gaps: The Council collects a significant amount of data, but it is becoming increasingly fragmented across different systems that do not integrate.

While the current ICT landscape presents several challenges, it also offers significant opportunities for improvement. The development of this framework is an essential step toward modernizing the Council's ICT infrastructure and ensuring it can meet the growing demands of the community and business.

Strategic Context

This ICT Strategic Framework is directed by both the Council's Strategic Management Plan 2024-2034 and influencing factors within the ICT industry. These provide context as to why the focus areas are important for Council to improve the services it provides and to deliver them with greater efficiency.

Influencing Factors - Strategic Management Plan

Enhance Digital Services

This is a broader look into Council's public-facing digital services derived from the '**Website Review and Improvement**' focus area. There is an ever-increasing expectation for digital services to be provided to the community. This includes completing Council-related tasks and obtaining information from computers, mobiles and other smart devices. Council-related information should be available and easily accessible online rather than requiring a phone call or an in-person visit.

Upgrade Software Infrastructure

The '**Software and Technology Upgrade**' focus area aims to review the current suite of software and implement new ones where required in order to improve workplace efficiency, flexibility and customer experience. Having the correct software solutions will allow for time and cost savings and a greater reduction in administrative overhead.



Strategic Context

Influencing Factors - ICT Industry

Software as a Service (SaaS)

The ICT industry continues to move to Software as a Service products as the preferred method of providing software applications. At a core level, SaaS applications are cloud-hosted, accessible using a web browser and only rely on internet connectivity. They do not rely on locally installed software.

SaaS provides many benefits to Council. It moves away from expensive, on-premises hardware and software in favour of ongoing subscription options. This decreases the upfront cost and the time required from the ICT team to implement and maintain while increasing the accessibility, security, scalability and uptime of the applications.

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity threats continue to grow at an exponential rate. These range from phishing emails and malware to full ransomware attacks. In order to prevent a cybersecurity incident resulting in downtime or loss / exposure of data, Council must be committed to investing in its Cybersecurity digital and physical infrastructure.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence has had a steady rise to the forefront of the industry. It is a powerful information management and interpretation tool that has the potential to greatly increase the efficiency of data management and data-driven tasks.

However, AI is not without its own set of risks, primarily centred around appropriate use and privacy concerns. AI governance within Council will have to be a key focus area as it further spreads through all facets of technology.

Influencing Factors - Continually Adapting

Technology is not a static field, it is continually shifting, growing and changing into new forms. Council cannot be resistant to change and must be willing to adopt new technologies whilst also ensuring that they serve a purpose within the organisation.

An aerial photograph of a steep, green hillside. A wooden staircase with metal railings leads up the slope. A large, leafy tree is prominent on the left side of the hill. The top of the hill is covered in dense green vegetation.

Strategic Context

Strategic Guiding Principles

Improved Service

The delivery of the ICT Strategic Framework should improve the service that Council provides to the community and other key stakeholders.

Digitalisation

Continue to digitise internal processes. Staff will need to adapt to new technologies and the digital world.

Proven and Reliable

The technology used to deliver the ICT Strategic Framework should be industry standard and supportable, not bleeding edge and unproven.

Efficiency

Where possible, ICT should aim to improve internal processes and increase workplace efficiency.

Continual Improvement

Council must continue to invest in the improvement of technologies and services in order to stay in line with best practice and industry standards.

Key Focus Areas

The four key focus areas for the ICT Strategic Framework are:

1	Digital Transformation
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2	Information Management
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3	Cybersecurity
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4	Fit for Purpose
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Solid digital transformation relies on correct information management and the protection of this information. The technology used in this transformation must also be fit for purpose to ensure that the Council's investment is not wasted.

Key Focus Areas

Digital Transformation

Digital transformation is a forward-looking statement that defines how Council sees itself in the digital age. It is a process and cultural change in the organisation where digital technologies are used to improve existing business processes and community experience.

A successful digital transformation would allow for:

- Improved community experience through better information flow and engagement.
- Increased agility, innovation and collaboration through Council operations.
- Allow for greater self-service options for customers, also reducing Council workload.
- Empower the workforce with better technology so that they are better informed.

Processes and Cultural Changes

The successful implementation of digital transformation requires significant process and cultural change.

Sharing Information

For a customer to be able to complete a self-service request, all the required information and rules around the process must be provided to them. Where they would normally contact Council, the information must be easily accessible online.

Self Service

There must be an acceptance of online information access, self-service and automation by outward-facing staff. Self-service for customers and suppliers should be encouraged.

Technology First

Look to use technology to improve processes and customer experience. Understand how the technology works and how it saves time, effort and provides improvement.

Reassess Business Processes

Current business processes are largely based around the capabilities of Council's legacy ERP, SynergySoft. A fresh approach to processes, distinct from the current ERP, will be required for genuine process improvement.

Key Focus Areas

Information Management

Data is the raw material for information. Large amounts of data are taken in by Council and processed into information. There is already a reliance on quick access to digital information within Council. This demand is only growing, and it is imperative that our information management network continues to support this.

Records management continues to be an important legislative requirement but its objective is to record information for historical purposes. Information management is separate as it involves quick, timely and clear access to current operational information. Correct information management is critical to allow staff to deliver more efficient, higher quality service to the public.

To enable improved decision making, there is a requirement to:

- Improve and regulate the quality of digital information.
 - Provide timely access to information.
 - Better integrate separate business systems across the Council.
 - Better management of staff and customer information.
 - Present digital information with more clarity for ease of understanding.
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Cybersecurity

In an increasingly digital environment, cybersecurity and data protection are critical components of Council's ICT Strategic Framework. As Council expands its digital services, collects more information and engages with the community, businesses and partners online, it becomes an active target for cyber threats. LGA compromises are rapidly becoming more commonplace with bad actors actively targeting regional councils.

Council's commitment to increased cybersecurity will focus on:

- Increasing compliance with industry standard cybersecurity frameworks.
- Ensuring legislative compliance and data privacy.
- Enhance cybersecurity awareness and training.
- Increase technical security controls, threat intelligence and monitoring.
- Review, update and test incident response and disaster recovery plans.

Effective cybersecurity and data protection methods are essential to maintaining trust, ensuring uninterrupted service delivery and protecting sensitive information. Council will take a proactive, risk-based and resilient approach to cybersecurity, embedding it as a core component of all ICT activities.

Key Focus Areas

Fit for Purpose

Technology Modernisation often sits alongside Digital Transformation. As Council progresses with improved Information Management and a program of Digital Transformation it is important that the organisation does not get lost in the swaths of new, bleeding edge technology. Technology purchasing decisions need to be made on a 'fit for purpose' basis.

Enterprise Resource Planning Systems

The Southern Limestone Coast Council, like many regional Councils, has an ERP system from a single supplier that has been in use for many years. This system has core modules for financial management, payroll, record management, rates and property as well as additional modules for other aspects of the organisation.

There are currently major limitations with the current system, such as:

- Processes that are built around the capability of the ERP system and not the requirements of the organisation.
- Continual improvement is restricted by the capability of the ERP.
- Manual handling of data is required in order to move information from other systems to the ERP or vice versa.

In order to progress with the digital transformation initiatives, Council will have to consider replacing the ageing ERP system with modern alternatives. The replacement system will have to be determined to be fit for purpose and also offer a higher level of integration with current Council systems.

What does 'Fit for Purpose' mean for the Southern Limestone Coast Council?

The principle of 'Fit for Purpose' for the Southern Limestone Coast Council encompasses technology that is:

- Based on industry standards.
- Easy to use.
- Configurable instead of programmable.
- Not over-engineered.
- Best of its kind in the price bracket.
- Covers the core requirements.

Implementing 'Fit for Purpose'

To implement the 'Fit for Purpose' methodology, a different approach is required for technology procurement.

- Increased focus on requirements analysis, especially core requirements.
- Embrace SaaS and change suppliers if necessary.
- Consider how the solution integrates with other Council systems.



Implementation Roadmap

The implementation roadmap will address the key focus areas defined in this framework. These key focus areas are broken down into several lower-level items. The roadmap is designed to be flexible and adapt to the changing needs of the organisation and industry trends.

Governance

The implementation of the key items will be directed and controlled by a formalized governance framework. This framework will ensure that ICT decisions are made in alignment with business priorities.

Item	Estimated Budget	Timeline
Desktop review of ICT Strategic Framework	Internal	Annual
Full review of ICT Strategic Framework	Internal	26/27 - 28/29
Develop Cloud Migration Strategy	Internal	26/27

Implementation Roadmap

Digital Transformation

Digital Transformation covers both our outward-facing and internal technologies. The primary forms of digital transformation are covered under Business Systems and Applications and Infrastructure and Technology.

Business System and Applications

Item	Estimated Budget	Timeline
Review and improve website	\$20k	25/26
ERP Software Replacement	\$400k	25/26 through to 27/28
Migrate to cloud-hosted VOIP system	\$50k	25/26

Infrastructure and Technology

Plan and undertake server upgrade	\$80k	25/26
Migrate from local Active Directory to Azure services	Internal	After ERP replacement
Undertake virtual server review to assess necessity and cloud transition options	Internal	25/26
Plan for local server retirement	Internal	29/30
Upgrade Saleyards server	\$10k	24/25
Investigate SaaS options for Saleyards software	TBC	26/27
Redesign Saleyards network for increased security	Internal	25/26
Upgrade user workstation and peripherals to ensure they meet organisational requirements	\$90k	28/29



Implementation Roadmap

Information Management

Maintaining proper information management systems are essential to provide Council employees and customers with timely, accurate information. Reducing data fragmentation and increasing remote access is a large focus area of this section.

Item	Estimated Budget	Timeline
Migrate to cloud-hosted data server	TBC	Late 25/26 to 26/27
Ensure all new systems integrate with current key systems	Internal	Ongoing
Investigate the implementation of council records being hosted digitally in a cloud platform	Internal	ERP dependent
Implement whole-of-enterprise search capabilities	TBC	ERP dependent

Implementation Roadmap

Cybersecurity

As cybersecurity threats continue to rise and LGAs become active targets, Council must continue to increase its cybersecurity posture. This is not only implementing software and hardware solutions but also maintaining and developing business continuity plans and processes.

Security

Item	Estimated Budget	Timeline
Implement Essential 8 compliance strategy	Internal	26/27
Implement MDR security services	\$70k	26/27
Engage ICT security specialist to conduct vulnerability assessment	\$10k	26/27
Enforce MFA across all business applications and systems	Internal	25/26
Improve remote working access and security	\$10k	26/27
Increase cybersecurity training	LGA Initiative	24/25-Ongoing
Increase security camera presence in key areas	\$90k	Late 24/25 to 25/26

Business Continuity

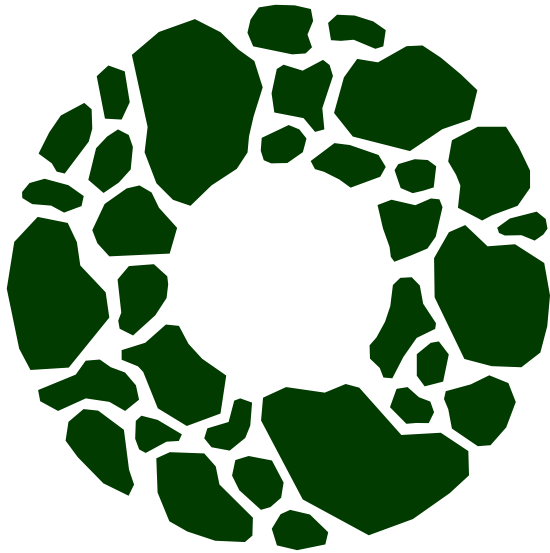
Review and update Council's ICT Disaster Recovery Plan	Internal	25/26
Review and update Council's ICT Disaster testing process and procedures	Internal	25/26
Develop backup recovery procedures and implement quarterly testing	Internal	25/26

Implementation Roadmap

Fit for Purpose

Alongside the implementation of these projects, Council must maintain a 'Fit for Purpose' mindset, ensuring that everything implemented is correctly evaluated and serves a purpose.

Item	Estimated Budget	Timeline
Create Software licence review schedule	Internal	25/26
Implement annual ICT software and hardware contract renewal review process	Internal	26/27
Review telecommunication service contracts to ensure operational and financial benefits are maximised	Internal	Annual
Ensure cloud services are evaluated for suitability when existing ICT infrastructure or systems are replaced, or new ones are procured	Internal	Ongoing
Undertake assessment of suitability for key business systems and applications	Internal	Ongoing
Continual review of business systems outside of main ERP	Internal	Ongoing



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