

Smarter Processes for Stronger Councils

Insights from Local Government Leaders

FUJIFILM Business Innovation Australia x Nintex findings

Insights from our local government roundtable at the **Local Government Focus Day Victoria**, exploring how councils are approaching automation, governance, and service delivery in an increasingly complex operating environment.

Table of Contents

- 03 Executive Introduction: Smarter Processes for a Changing Council Environment
- 04 Section 1: The Reality of Fragmented Council Workflows
- 05 Section 2: From Isolated Initiatives to Operational Capability
- 06 Section 3: Strengthening Governance, Compliance and Control
- 07 Section 4: Improving Community Outcomes Through Better Processes
- 08 Section 5: What Councils Are Prioritising
- 09 Conclusion: From Insight to Action





Executive Introduction

Smarter Processes for a Changing Council Environment

This report brings together insights from a local government roundtable hosted by **FUJIFILM Business Innovation Australia and Nintex at Local Government Focus Day Victoria (LG Focus Day)**, which took place in March 2026. The discussion focused on how councils are responding to growing operational pressure, and where process improvement is becoming a priority.

Across Australia, councils are navigating increasing complexity. Rising service expectations, expanding compliance obligations, and ongoing workforce pressures are placing strain on internal teams. At the same time, communities expect faster, more transparent, and more accessible services, often delivered digitally and without delay.

Our roundtable findings suggest that many of these challenges are not isolated to a single system or function. Instead, they emerge across the way work flows through councils, particularly in areas involving approvals, information management, and coordination across teams.

This aligns with broader research across Australian organisations, where leaders continue to report increasing pressure to manage complexity, improve efficiency, and deliver better outcomes with constrained resources.¹

Within local government, digital transformation efforts are continuing to accelerate. However, many organisations still face barriers such as legacy infrastructure, fragmented systems, and limited capacity to scale change effectively.²

Taken together, this points to a shift in focus. Rather than concentrating solely on digitising individual tasks, councils are increasingly looking at how processes can be better designed, connected, and managed across the organisation.

This report explores these themes in more detail, combining roundtable insights with broader sector context to highlight where operational friction is occurring and how councils can begin to take a more structured, process-led approach to improve efficiencies.

Section 1

The Reality of Fragmented Council Workflows

One of the clearest insights from the LG Focus Day roundtable was that operational challenges are not isolated to individual systems or functions. Instead, they are embedded across the way work flows through councils, particularly in processes that span multiple teams, approvals, and systems.

Our roundtable findings highlight that the most significant areas of operational pressure sit within high-volume, process-driven workflows:

- Employee Onboarding **20.8%**
- Information Management **19.5%**
- Planning Applications **18.8%**

Together, these account for nearly **60% of all responses**, pointing to a common challenge across councils. These are not niche or isolated issues, but core operational processes that sit at the centre of how councils function day to day.

What these processes share is complexity. Each involves multiple stakeholders, handovers between departments, and a reliance on both structured and unstructured information. In many cases, they also rely on a combination of digital systems, manual inputs, and paper-based steps.

This pattern continues across the next tier of responses. Paper-based approvals (**13.6%**), business planning (**9.1%**),

and accessibility reviews (**5.2%**) further reinforce the extent to which governance, approvals, and compliance processes contribute to operational friction.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the issue is not a single broken process. Rather, it reflects a broader challenge of fragmentation across council workflows. Information may sit in different systems, approvals may occur across multiple channels, and visibility into process status is often limited.

This fragmentation can create a range of downstream impacts. Delays in approvals can slow service delivery. Inconsistent information capture can introduce compliance risks. Manual handovers can increase the likelihood of duplication, rework, and errors.

Importantly, these challenges are not confined to back-office functions. Processes such as planning applications and service requests sit directly at the intersection of internal operations and community outcomes. When workflows are fragmented, the impact is often felt not only by staff, but also by the communities councils serve.

These findings reinforce a key insight from the roundtable. Improving individual tasks in isolation is unlikely to address the underlying issue. Instead, there is a need to look more closely at how processes are designed, connected, and managed across the organisation as a whole.



Section 2

From Isolated Initiatives to Operational Capability

While many councils have already invested in digitising processes, discussions at **our roundtable** suggest that progress is often fragmented. Improvements are typically made in response to specific pain points, whether onboarding, approvals, or records management, but rarely with a consistent approach to how processes are designed across the organisation.

The result is a growing mix of systems, workflows, and tools that do not always connect. While individual processes may improve, the broader issue of how work flows across teams often remains unchanged. This reinforces the pattern identified in our findings, where the majority of challenges sat within cross-functional, process-heavy workflows rather than isolated tasks.

This is where a shift is starting to emerge. Rather than continuing to layer solutions onto existing processes, councils are beginning to recognise the need to rethink how those processes are structured in the first place.

At its core, this is a move from **project-based automation to operational capability**. Instead of asking how to fix a single workflow, the focus becomes how to design, standardise, and manage workflows across the organisation in a consistent and scalable way.

This approach introduces a different way of thinking about automation. Workflows are no longer treated as isolated tasks, but as connected processes that move information, decisions, and accountability across teams. When designed effectively, they provide greater visibility into how work is progressing, where bottlenecks exist, and how outcomes can be improved over time.

Our roundtable discussions highlighted a common challenge. Without a structured approach to workflow design, councils can struggle to scale improvements beyond individual teams. Processes may be digitised in one area but remain manual in another. Visibility remains limited, and opportunities to improve coordination are often missed.

Across the broader market, there is growing recognition that organisations need to connect processes end to end, rather than optimise individual steps in isolation.¹ This is particularly relevant in council environments, where services rely on coordination between departments, systems, and stakeholders.



For councils, this points to a more deliberate path forward. It involves establishing a consistent approach to how workflows are mapped, governed, and improved over time, supported by platforms that enable integration across existing systems.

This is where workflow platforms such as **Nintex** are increasingly being used to support this shift, helping councils design, automate, and manage processes in a way that is scalable, visible, and aligned across the organisation.

Section 3

Strengthening Governance, Compliance and Control

Across our roundtable discussions, one theme stood out. Many of the processes creating the most friction are also the ones carrying the greatest level of risk.

19.5% of respondents identified information management as a key challenge, making it one of the most significant pressure points across councils.

When combined with related areas such as accessibility reviews, privacy impact assessments, freedom of information requests, and business planning, a clear pattern emerges. A substantial share of operational pressure sits within processes tied to governance, compliance, and accountability.

These processes depend on accurate information, clear ownership, and a reliable record of decisions. Yet in many councils, they are still managed across multiple systems, spreadsheets, and manual steps. This makes it difficult to maintain visibility, track progress, and ensure consistency across teams.

Over time, these gaps introduce risk. Not through a single failure, but through small inconsistencies that build across processes. Audit preparation becomes more complex. Approvals are harder to trace. Confidence in information can be reduced.

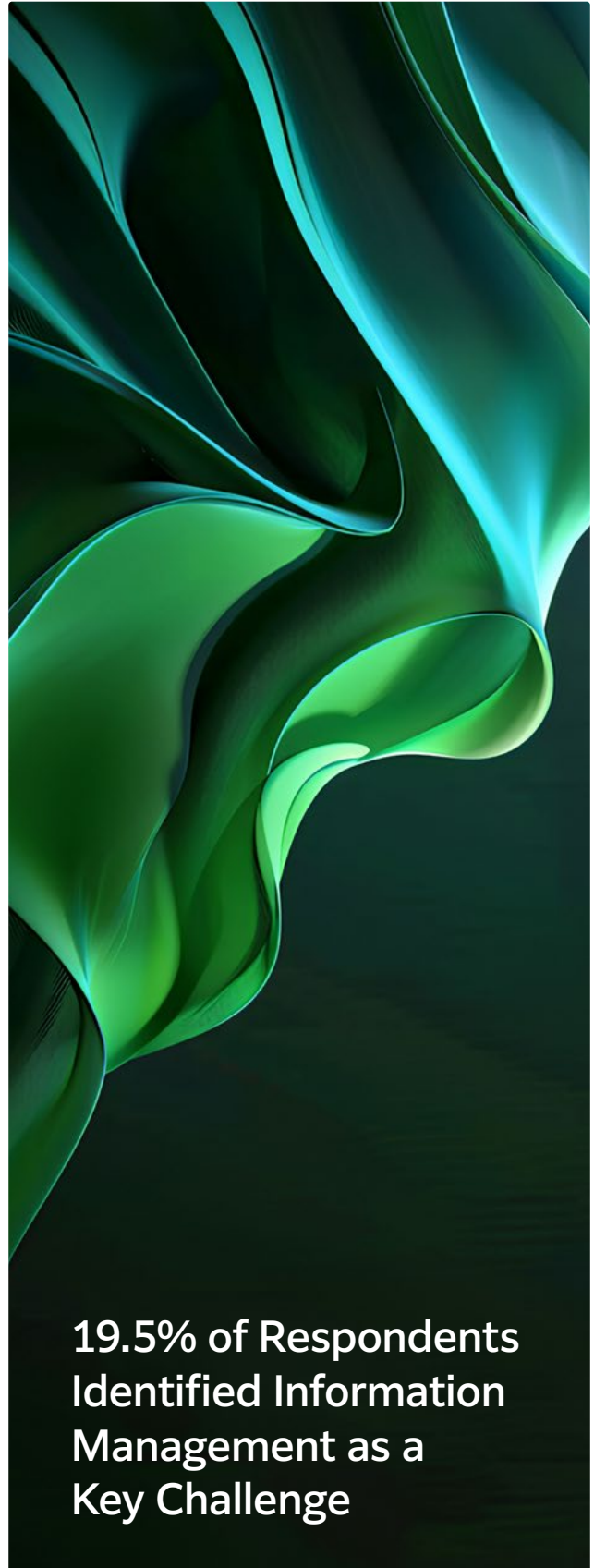
A more structured approach to workflow design can help address this. By standardising how information is captured, routed, and approved, councils can improve consistency and visibility across governance processes. Each step can be tracked, decisions recorded, and information made easier to access when needed.

This is not about adding more controls. It is about making processes easier to follow and easier to manage. When workflows are clearly defined, compliance becomes part of how work is done, rather than an additional task.

Our roundtable discussions reflected this shift, with councils placing increasing focus on improving visibility, reducing manual tracking, and strengthening how information is managed across the organisation.

Across the broader market, organisations are also placing greater emphasis on governance, risk, and compliance as core operational priorities.¹

For councils, this presents an opportunity to reduce risk, strengthen accountability, and build a more reliable foundation for broader operational improvement.



**19.5% of Respondents
Identified Information
Management as a
Key Challenge**

Section 4

Improving Community Outcomes Through Better Processes



While many of the challenges discussed at our roundtable sit within internal operations, the community is often directly impacted by them.

Processes such as planning applications, service requests, and approvals are not just internal workflows. They shape how quickly councils can respond, how clearly they can communicate, and how consistently services are delivered.

This is reflected in **18.8% of respondents identifying planning applications as a key challenge**, highlighting the pressure on processes that sit closest to community outcomes.

Where Process Breakdowns Impact the Community

When workflows are fragmented, the impact is rarely contained within the organisation. It can show up as:



- Delays in approvals and service delivery
- Limited visibility into request or application status
- Inconsistent communication across departments and community
- Rework caused by incomplete or duplicated information

For residents and businesses, this often translates into longer wait times and reduced confidence in council processes.

What Changes When Processes Are Connected

Where workflows are clearly designed and connected, councils are better positioned to deliver consistent and responsive services. This can enable:



- Faster turnaround times for applications and requests
- Clearer communication with residents and stakeholders
- Improved visibility across service delivery processes
- More consistent outcomes across departments

Reducing Pressure on Teams

Our roundtable discussions also highlighted the impact on workforce capability. When processes rely on manual steps and follow-ups, staff spend significant time managing administration rather than delivering outcomes.

By reducing this burden, councils can free up capacity across teams, allowing greater focus on higher-value work that supports the community.

Across the broader public sector, there is growing emphasis on delivering more responsive and transparent services.¹ For councils, this often begins with how effectively internal processes are structured and managed.

Improving community outcomes does not always require new services. Often, it starts with improving how work flows behind the scenes.

Section 5

What Councils Are Prioritising



The challenges highlighted throughout our roundtable point to a broader shift in focus. Councils are no longer just looking to improve individual processes. Increasingly, attention is turning to how those processes connect, scale, and support long-term outcomes.

The distribution of responses across onboarding, information management, planning, approvals, and compliance processes reinforces this. The issue is not a single workflow, but how work is structured across the organisation.

Emerging Areas of Focus

Based on our roundtable discussions, several priorities are beginning to take shape:



Connecting Systems and Workflows

Reducing reliance on disconnected tools by improving how information and processes move across platforms.



Improving Visibility Across Processes

Creating clearer oversight of workflow status, approvals, and bottlenecks to support better decision-making.



Strengthening Process Ownership and Governance

Establishing more consistent approaches to how workflows are designed, managed, and improved over time.



Supporting Workforce Sustainability

Reducing administrative burdens so teams can focus on higher-value work.

Moving from Reactive to Structured Improvement

A common theme across our roundtable was the challenge of keeping pace with demand. Many councils are responding to immediate pressures, whether related to service delivery, compliance, or resource constraints.

However, this reactive approach can make it difficult to achieve sustained improvement. As new challenges emerge, processes are often adapted without foresight or structure, rather than redesigned in a consistent and scalable way.

This is where a more structured approach becomes important. By taking a step back to map, standardise, and connect workflows, councils can create a more stable foundation for ongoing improvement.

Building Capability Over Time

Rather than attempting large-scale change all at once, many councils are looking to prioritise high-impact workflows and build capability progressively.

This may involve:

- Identifying processes with the greatest volume or complexity
- Standardising how workflows are documented and managed
- Introducing tools that support visibility, automation, and integration
- Expanding improvements (like those shared above) across additional departments over time

This approach allows councils to balance immediate needs with longer-term goals, while building confidence and capability along the way.

As councils continue to evolve, the focus is shifting from isolated improvements to more connected, organisation-wide approaches. Those that are able to align processes, systems, and teams are better positioned to respond to change and deliver consistent outcomes over time.

Conclusion

From Insight to Action

The insights shared at **our roundtable at LG Focus Day** point to a clear and consistent theme. Councils are not dealing with isolated challenges, but with increasing complexity across how work flows through the organisation.

From onboarding and information management to planning applications, approvals, and compliance, the pressure sits within processes that span multiple teams, systems, and responsibilities. Addressing these challenges requires more than incremental improvements. It requires a more structured approach to how workflows are designed, connected, and managed over time.

Encouragingly, this shift is already underway. Councils are beginning to move beyond isolated initiatives and towards more coordinated, organisation-wide approaches to process improvement.

Where to Start

For many councils, the starting point is not large-scale transformation, but clarity.

- Understanding how key processes currently operate
- Identifying where delays, duplication, or risk is prevalent
- Prioritising high-impact workflows
- Establishing a consistent approach to process design and governance

From there, improvements can be introduced progressively, building capability over time while delivering immediate value in priority areas.

A Connected Approach to Process Improvement

At **FUJIFILM Business Innovation Australia**, we work with councils to take a practical and structured approach to process improvement. This includes mapping and optimising workflows, improving visibility across operations, and supporting integration across existing systems.

Through our partnership with **Nintex**, we bring workflow automation and process management capability that enables councils to design, automate, and manage processes in a consistent and scalable way.

Together, this provides a connected approach, combining:

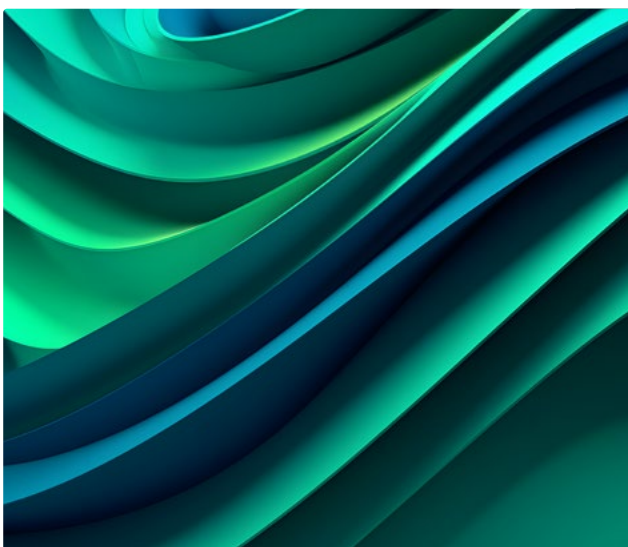
- Process expertise and advisory capability
- Workflow design, automation, and orchestration
- Integration across systems and information
- Ongoing optimisation and support

Moving Forward with Confidence

As councils continue to respond to increasing demands, the ability to improve workflows across the organisation will become a key differentiator.

Those that can create visibility across processes, reduce reliance on manual coordination, and build consistent approaches to workflow design, will be better positioned to manage complexity, reduce risk, and deliver more responsive engagement with, and services to, their communities.

We look forward to continuing the conversation and supporting councils as they take the next step.



Speak with our team to explore how workflow automation and process improvement can support your council.



Learn More About Our Local Government Solutions

See how councils across Australia are modernising operations, streamlining processes and improving service delivery.



¹ KPMG Australia (2025). Keeping Us Up At Night 2025.
<https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/au/pdf/2025/keeping-us-up-at-night-2025.pdf>

² Public Sector Network (2026). Local Government Focus Day Victoria – Event Overview.
<https://publicsectornetwork.com/events/local-government-focus-day-victoria-melbourne-cbd-2026/>

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