

DIRECTOR

Corporate and Organisational Services

Benalla Rural City Council

Candidate Information Pack | November 2026

GEM EXECUTIVE Executive search for local government and not-for-profit

Acknowledgement of Country

Benalla Rural City Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work, and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

Benalla Rural City sits on the traditional lands of the Taungurung and Yorta Yorta peoples, whose enduring connection to Country continues to shape the region's identity. Council is committed to respectful collaboration, cultural preservation and reconciliation.

About Benalla Rural City



Benalla Rural City is a welcoming regional community in north-east Victoria, around two hours from Melbourne. It is home to more than 14,500 people, with over a third living in rural communities beyond the township of Benalla, contributing to a strong rural lifestyle and a diverse local economy.

Benalla is renowned for its arts and cultural identity. More than 79,000 people visited the Benalla Art Gallery in 2023–24, and a growing collection of street and silo art in Benalla, Goorambat and Devenish continues to draw visitors. Council supports popular events including the Benalla Street Art Festival and the annual Benalla Festival in November. The Winton Motor Raceway, the Winton Wetlands, the Warby Ranges and Mount Samaria State Park add heritage, motorsport and outdoor adventure to the region's appeal.

The community is changing. Punjabi is now the second most common language spoken at home, reflecting a growing South Asian community and the region's evolving cultural diversity.

14,528 Population (2021)	**51** Median age	**$1.1b** Gross Regional Product	**79,000+** Art Gallery visitors 2023–24	**19%** Of residents volunteer

Major industries

Health care and social assistance is the region's leading employer (15.1%), followed by construction (12.6%, up 4.2%), agriculture, forestry and fishing (9.7%), manufacturing (8.5%) and retail trade (8.2%). The region also has advanced manufacturing operations and a vocational training presence through GOTAFE. Access to skilled labour is shaped by housing availability and workforce retention.

Our Vision

> **Community Vision 2036**
>
> *Benalla Rural City is welcoming and friendly, thriving and prosperous, environmentally responsible, innovative and industrious, caring and supportive, and engaging for all residents and visitors — a place where people want to continue to live, move to and are proud to call home.*

The Community Vision 2036 was developed through a deliberative engagement process involving more than 700 community members and a panel of independent representatives. It is supported by seven guiding themes, including community wellbeing and sense of place, a vibrant, thriving and progressive economy, a destination of choice, and leadership and community spirit, all of which sit within this Director's remit.

Council's Vision	A sustainable, thriving and cohesive community where lifestyle, culture, health and wellbeing are supported by sound leadership and community partnership.
Council's Purpose	To work in partnership with the community to build a connected, future-focused municipality where people and place can thrive.
Council's Values	Accountability, Continuous improvement, Equity, Integrity, Leadership and Respect.

Our Council



Benalla Rural City Council is governed by seven councillors: Mayor Cr Bernie Hearn, Deputy Mayor Cr Justin King, and Crs Peter Davis, Puna Hewa Gunaratne, David Blore, Jillian Merkel and Vince Branigan.

The Council Plan 2025–2029 is Council's four-year strategic plan under the Local Government Act 2020. For the first time, Council worked with a Community Panel to help shape it, and it integrates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Disability Action Plan into a single document. It is built around five themes: Community, Economy, Environment, Liveability and Leadership.

Progress is monitored through the Annual Report, quarterly internal reporting, community updates such as annual scorecards, and a mid-term review at the two-year mark.

Services this Director leads

Community development and family services	Programs fostering community resilience, family wellbeing and youth development, including early years services.
Economic development	Business support, tourism efforts and cultural development to enhance the community's vibrancy.
Arts, culture and recreation	The Benalla Art Gallery, an aquatic centre and eight recreation and sporting centres, supported by events and programs.
Finance, rates and procurement	The annual Budget, long-term Financial Plan, Revenue and Rating Plan, and procurement.
Governance, people and performance	Statutory compliance, risk, records, workforce and culture across the organisation.

What Our Community Is Telling Us

Council's engagement for the 2025–2029 Plan included 71 individual consultations, five community workshops, four community panel sessions, 13 listening sessions and street pop-ups across the municipality, together with a community survey. Several priorities bear directly on this role:

- **Health access is the biggest barrier.** Difficulty accessing healthcare (GPs, specialists, transport) was the top barrier to wellbeing in the survey (76.2%), followed by financial pressures affecting health-related decisions (64.0%). Improving mental health and emotional wellbeing services was the leading health priority (56.4%).
- **Safety and family wellbeing.** Preventing family violence was a priority for 54.1% of respondents, and community members told Council that early mental health support for children under 12 remains limited.
- **Local business first.** Supporting and growing small business was the top economic priority (60.5%), ahead of attracting industries to the region (49.9%) and tourism (40.7%). Residents also want more to do in the evenings.
- **Grants and partnerships.** Continuing community grants was the most popular liveability priority (50.6%), and strengthening collaboration between Council and community organisations followed closely (48.8%).
- **Volunteers need support.** Local groups run on volunteers and finding new ones is getting harder.
- **Inclusion.** Residents want more events in smaller towns and more cultural celebrations that reflect a diverse community, and some people still feel left out of community life, especially if they are new, live outside Benalla or speak another language.
- **Decisions should be visible.** Community feedback should shape decisions, and word of mouth (69.2%) and social media (65.7%) remain the main ways people get their information.

The Opportunity



The Director Corporate and Organisation Services is a new executive role, created as part of the CEO's new executive team. It brings together the functions that keep Council sustainable, accountable and connected to its community: finance, rates and procurement, governance, people and performance, economic development and sustainability, and community services.

Key challenges and opportunities

- **Financial sustainability.** Rates alone are not enough to fund the initiatives in the Council Plan, so securing State and Federal funding is essential. The Director will lead the Budget, long-term Financial Plan and financial advice that makes the Plan achievable, supported by the Revenue and Rating Plan and the 10-Year Asset Plan.
- **An ageing community and workforce shortages.** With a median age of 51, residents aged 75 and over are forecast to more than double by 2036. Workforce shortages affect both service capacity and local employment, and the Plan commits Council to maintaining an educated, healthy, safe, inclusive and diverse workforce.
- **An integrated health and wellbeing agenda.** The Council Plan now includes the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Disability Action Plan, delivered with partners including Benalla Health and the Goulburn Valley Public Health Unit.
- **Economic growth and the visitor economy.** Council will attract investment and support local businesses, improve accommodation and the night-time economy, and work with partners on learning and employment pathways, drawing on assets such as the Art Gallery, street art and the Winton Wetlands.
- **Cost-of-living and community need.** Cost-of-living pressures, limited access to mental health services, digital exclusion and transport barriers affect residents, particularly young people, rural residents and the isolated or vulnerable.
- **Governance and a high-performance culture.** The Plan commits Council to meeting its legislative obligations, delivering accessible and responsive services, and engaging clearly and openly with the community.

What we are looking for

A senior executive who can combine strong financial and governance leadership with genuine commitment to community wellbeing and economic growth, build trusted relationships with Councillors, and lead a diverse directorate through change.

The Position

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, the Director Corporate and Organisation Services provides strategic and operational leadership across Council's corporate and community-facing functions, ensuring financial sustainability, good governance and statutory compliance while contributing to a vibrant, healthy, safe and connected community. As a key member of the Executive Leadership Team, the Director contributes to organisational strategy and the Council Plan, and serves as a trusted adviser to the CEO, Mayor and Councillors. The Director will deputise for the CEO as required.

Classification	Senior Executive Officer
Division	Corporate and Organisation Services
Reports to	Chief Executive Officer
Employment	Executive / Senior Officer contract under s.42 of the Local Government Act 2020

Key responsibilities

- **Leadership and strategy.** Translate Council's strategic direction into clear priorities, contribute to the Council Plan, annual Budget and Strategic Resource Plan, lead the Directorate through change, and anticipate emerging legislative, financial and operational risks.
- **Finance, rates and procurement.** Lead preparation, monitoring and reporting of the annual budget, long-term financial plan and financial statements, advise on financial sustainability and borrowings, and oversee rates, revenue and procurement.
- **Governance.** Ensure compliance with the Local Government Act 2020, coordinate internal and external audit and support the Audit and Risk Committee, maintain the risk management framework and business continuity planning, support Council elections and meetings, and oversee records management.
- **People and performance.** Provide strategic leadership on human resources, recruitment, learning and development and workplace culture, lead or support enterprise bargaining and industrial relations, and ensure occupational health and safety compliance, equal opportunity and diversity.
- **Economic development and sustainability.** Lead the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, build relationships with business, industry groups, Regional Development Victoria and Tourism North East, and pursue grant funding and partnerships.
- **Community.** Lead community wellbeing, family services and early years operations including childcare and maternal and child health, leisure and recreation, libraries, galleries and theatres, and emergency management, and champion Council's commitment to being a child safe organisation.
- **Elected member relations.** Build strong, professional and trusted relationships with the Mayor and Councillors, provide clear and well-briefed advice, support Councillor induction and development, and manage sensitive issues with discretion and sound judgement.

The Organisation

The Director leads a multi-disciplinary directorate and sits on the Executive Leadership Team under the CEO. The functions of the Directorate are shown below.



Our Ideal Candidate

We are looking for a senior leader who can safeguard Council's financial sustainability and governance while championing the community services and economic development that make Benalla a place people want to live in, work in and visit.

You will be a strategic and values-based executive with highly developed people leadership skills and the maturity and judgement to navigate complex or politically sensitive situations. You will communicate persuasively to Council, the community and external stakeholders, and build trusted working relationships with the Mayor and Councillors. You will bring strong financial and corporate management skills, a sound grasp of governance, risk and legislative compliance in local government, and a genuine interest in community wellbeing and regional economic development.

This is a role in which a Director can make a visible difference. You will lead a diverse directorate in a community that values its character and its future, and you will help shape both.

Candidate Skills Matrix

Technical skills and experience

In addition to local government experience, the following areas of technical expertise have been identified for focus in the selection of our ideal candidate.

1	**Local government and industry experience** Demonstrated understanding of local government and its distinct management requirements, with significant senior management experience in local government or a comparable multi-functional corporate and community services environment.
2	**Financial management and sustainability** Strong financial and corporate management skills, including budget and long-term financial plan development, financial reporting to statutory and accounting standards, rates and revenue, borrowings, and procurement probity. Professional accounting membership (CA/CPA/IPA) is desirable.
3	**Governance, risk and compliance** Understanding of the Local Government Act 2020 and governance obligations, including audit and risk committees, risk registers, and the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.
4	**People, culture and industrial relations** Understanding of human resource management, employment law and industrial relations, with experience in enterprise bargaining, workplace culture, occupational health and safety, and equal employment opportunity and diversity.
5	**Economic development and tourism** Knowledge of economic development and tourism principles and their application in a regional local government context, including relationships with business, industry groups and regional partners, and success in attracting grant funding.
6	**Community services and wellbeing** Experience leading or overseeing community wellbeing, family services and early years, leisure and recreation, and cultural venues, with an understanding of community engagement and customer service expectations across a diverse community.
7	**Emergency management and child safety** Knowledge of emergency management frameworks and Council's role in municipal emergency response and recovery, and of child safety obligations including the Child Safe Standards and Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.
8	**Strategic leadership and change** Proven strategic leadership with a track record of driving organisational performance, culture and change, and of contributing to whole-of-organisation planning including the Council Plan, Budget and Strategic Resource Plan.
9	**Elected member and stakeholder relations** Experience presenting to Council and engaging with elected representatives, supporting Councillors in their governance responsibilities, managing sensitive issues with discretion, and negotiating across government, industry and community.

Behavioural skills

1	**Strategic leadership** Provides visionary, values-based leadership, translates strategy into operational outcomes, and anticipates risks and opportunities for long-term sustainability.
2	**Trusted adviser** Provides clear, well-briefed and honest advice to the CEO, Mayor and Councillors, with integrity, respect and appropriate confidentiality.
3	**Effective communicator** Adjusts style to the audience, whether one-to-one, in front of Council or at a community forum. Listens well and is clear, concise and persuasive.
4	**Collaborative and influential** Builds constructive relationships across Council, government, industry and the community, finds common ground and drives consensus.
5	**Sound judgement and foresight** Makes timely, well-reasoned decisions, including in complex or politically sensitive situations, with foresight and initiative.
6	**Coaching and empowering** Develops capability in others, empowers managers and teams, and champions a safe, inclusive and high-performing culture.

About You



Ideal

- Tertiary qualifications in Accounting, Finance, Business, Community Services, Public Administration or a related discipline.
- Significant senior management experience, ideally within local government or a comparable multi-functional corporate and community services environment.
- Demonstrated experience leading diverse, multi-disciplinary teams and complex corporate and/or community functions, including budgets and stakeholder relationships.
- Current driver's licence.
- Satisfactory National Police Check and Working with Children Check.

Desirable

- Professional accounting membership (e.g. CA/CPA/IPA) or postgraduate qualifications in business administration, management or a related field.
- Experience leading governance, people and culture, economic development, tourism, finance or community wellbeing functions.
- Experience presenting to Council and engaging with elected representatives.

Our guiding principles

- **Fairness, equity and respect:** lead by example to build an inclusive workplace that recognises and encourages the value in everyone.
- **Leadership:** embracing, encouraging and recognising effective leadership at all levels.
- **Continuous improvement and innovation:** consistently finding better ways of delivering services and value.

Our Offering

Apart from the opportunity to live, work and lead in one of Victoria's most creative regional communities, the position is offered on an Executive / Senior Officer contract with a total remuneration package that includes base salary, superannuation and full private use vehicle.

Employment is subject to a satisfactory National Police Check, provision of evidence of qualifications and proof of eligibility to work in Australia. Working with Children Check and medical assessment may also apply, as relevant to the position. Council is an equal opportunity employer committed to a safe, harmonious and inclusive workplace, and is a child safe organisation with zero tolerance for child abuse.

Resourcing Timeline

1	**Initial conversation** Prior to submitting an application, a confidential discussion with Nick Kelly of GEM Executive regarding the role and your suitability. Prospective candidates must not contact Council. **Canvassing elected representatives directly or indirectly will disqualify applicants.** [Applications close: Monday 23rd November]
2	**Screening and selection for first-round interviews** GEM Executive will work closely with Council to develop a short-list of candidates for first-round interviews.
3	**First-round interviews** Facilitated by GEM Executive and conducted face-to-face or via video conference, followed by a group calibration to determine which candidates progress.
4	**Psychometric testing and employment checks** Candidates progressing will be required to complete psychometric testing and background checks.
5	**Second-round interviews** Second-round interviews will be held in Benalla, with further interview questions and a practical activity.
6	**Referee checks** GEM Executive will undertake reference checks for the preferred candidate(s).
7	**Negotiation and appointment** Facilitated by GEM Executive, with an offer of employment to follow.

Applying for the Role

Nick Kelly of GEM Executive is Council's recruitment partner for this process, and all enquiries are to be directed to GEM Executive on 0497 476 548.

To apply, please forward a detailed cover letter that outlines your qualifications, skills and experience as they relate to the desired technical and behavioural skills, along with your CV, to nick@gemexecutive.com.au.