

Policy – Elected Member Continuing Professional Development

Responsible Directorate	Corporate Services
Responsible Business Unit/s	Governance
Responsible Officer	Manager Governance
Affected Business Unit/s	Governance Office of the Chief Executive Officer

Objective

To ensure that elected members are provided opportunities to participate in continuing professional development as part of their obligation and duty to fulfil their role on Council.

Scope

This policy applies to all elected members of the Shire of Ashburton (the Shire).

Policy Statement

1. Introduction

Elected members have a unique and challenging role performing their functions under the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act). The Shire recognises the value of training and continuing professional development to supplement and build elected members skills and experience.

2. Compulsory Training

The *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996* (the Regulations) requires elected members to complete the Council Member Essentials. Certain exemptions, specified in the Regulations, apply.

Training must be completed within 12 months of being elected and is valid for five years. Non-compliance with the requirement to complete training is an offence under the *Local Government Act 1995*, punishable by a fine not exceeding \$5,000.

Following each ordinary election, elected members will be provided with information on training options from the approved training providers as stated in the Regulations. Elected members will be able to select a training option to meet their learning style and availability.

Compulsory training will be deducted from the individual elected member's annual Conference/Training budget allocation as detailed in clause 3.2 of this policy.

3. Continuing professional development

Subject to sufficient funds being available in the Conference/Training budget, elected members are encouraged to attend up to two separate professional development events each financial year.

Professional development can take several forms including, but not limited to, formal qualifications, short courses, seminars and conferences.

Professional development must relate to the role of an elected member and provide a benefit to Council, Shire and/or community. Examples of professional development relevant to an elected member's role are:

- Local government leadership;
- Town planning;
- Strategic planning;
- Financial management;
- Corporate governance;
- Risk management;
- Conflict resolution;
- Emergency management; and
- Public sector management.

Where possible, professional development should be conducted through a Registered Training Organisation. Organisations that provide training relating to the professional development of elected members include, but are not limited to:

- Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA);
- Australian Local Government Association (ALGA);
- Local Government Managers Australia (WA and national);
- Australian Institute of Management;
- Australian Institute of Company Directors; and
- Institute of Public Administration Australia.

3.1 Professional development approval

All requests for professional development shall be submitted on a Councillor Application for Training/Conference Attendance (CEO 058) form, to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in the first instance. The CEO is authorised to approve requests where it is considered to meet this policy and is within the individual elected member's annual Conference/Training budget allocation, as detailed in clause 3.2 of this policy.

Where:

- An elected member is seeking to attend more than two professional development events in a financial year, or an event outside of Australia, the request is required to be submitted to Council for its consideration.

- An elected member's request for professional development is declined by the CEO under this policy, the elected member may request the matter be referred to Council for determination.
- The CEO considers special circumstances apply in relation to an elected member's professional development request, the CEO may refer the request to Council for its consideration.

3.2 Conference/Training Budget

Each elected member will be allocated \$5,000 in the annual Conference/Training budget for professional development.

In addition to the individual elected member allocations, an annual budget will be set for the following:

- Attendance for all elected members at the annual WALGA WA Local Government Week Convention.
- The Shire President and Deputy President's attendance at either the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly or the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) State of the Nation forum.

3.3 Registration and travel

All professional development and associated travel (where applicable) shall be coordinated by the Shire.

The Shire will determine the most practical and cost-effective travel for elected members, based on their principal residential address within the Shire.

Private motor vehicle travel outside of the Shire boundary shall be approved by the Shire President and Chief Executive Officer prior to the travel being undertaken.

3.3.1 Accommodation and ancillaries

Accommodation requirements are to be supported by an official Council purchase order (where-ever possible) and coordinated by the Shire. Accommodation will be arranged for one night prior, during and one night after any professional development.

Accommodation bonds (where required) are the responsibility of elected members.

All reasonable expenses including taxi fares, meals, refreshments (including non-alcoholic mini-bar purchases) and other minor relevant incidentals will be reimbursed upon submission of a claim form and accompanying receipts. Claims may include a reasonable range of expenses commonly associated with living away from home and liaising with external stakeholders, such as a limited number of alcoholic refreshments accompanied with an evening meal and unforeseen/emergency clothes cleaning.

The Shire reserves the right to disallow excessive claims and invoice for reimbursement if required. Expenses like in-room movies and otherwise personal costs like grooming, will not be reimbursed. Reasonably avoidable costs like clothes washing or meal costs where they are otherwise provided by the accommodation package or the professional development will also not be reimbursed.

3.3.2 Accompanying person

Where an elected member is accompanied by a family member or partner on Council related professional development, all administration and associated costs in relation to the accompanying person, are the responsibility of the elected member.

The Shire will meet the cost of one family member or partner to accompany the elected member at an official conference dinner (or similar event).

3.3.3 Extended stay

Any elected member wishing to remain at a destination for additional days before or after their professional development, does so at their own expense (including not being covered by the Shire's insurance policies). Shire costs should not exceed what would otherwise have applied, for example, any return flights booked must be of equivalent or lesser value of the day they would have travelled (if it is higher, the elected member must meet the difference in those costs).

Any extension to accommodation should not be booked at a local government rate. However, should the discounted local government rate be applied, elected members are to take into account the gift implications which apply and complete the necessary disclosure form to ensure transparency of the accommodation payment transaction.

3.4 Knowledge sharing

On return from any professional development attended (excluding the annual WALGA WA Local Government Week Convention), elected members shall complete an Evaluation Form (CEO 054) and provide this to the CEO for inclusion in the CEO's Friday Facts or to be shared on the Councillors MS Teams channel.

Comments/learnings should be included in the form to enable knowledge sharing with all elected members.

4. Reporting

Section 5.127 of the Act requires that each financial year, a report must be prepared for the training completed by elected members in that financial year. The Chief Executive Officer must publish this report on the Shire's website by the end of July of every year.

Definitions

Approved Training Providers means the providers listed under regulation 35(2)(b) of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*, which are North & South Metropolitan TAFE and WALGA.

Council Members Essentials means the mandatory course for Council Members consisting of the following modules:

- Understanding local government;
- Serving on Council;
- Meeting procedures;
- Conflicts of interest; and
- Understanding of financial reports and budgets.

Relevant policies/documents

Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates

Recordkeeping Plan

Councillor Application for Training/Conference Attendance (CEO 058)

Council Members Travel Expense Claim Form (CEO 023)

Evaluation Form (CEO 054)

Relevant legislation/local laws

Local Government Act 1995

Section 5.98(2)(b) Fees etc. for council members

Section 5.126 Training for council members

Section 5.127 Report on training

Section 5.128 Policy for continuing professional development

Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996

Regulation 32(1) Expenses that may be approved for reimbursement

Regulation 35 Training for council members

Salaries and Allowances Tribunal determination – Local Government Chief Executive Officers and Elected Members

Office use only

Relevant delegations	Nil			
Council adoption	Date	12 July 2022	Resolution #	094/2022
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