

Councillor Professional Development Policy



January 2024

This policy was adopted by Council to set governing principles in place that align with the Strategic Community Plan 2040: Focus Area Performance: Outcome PF.1: Responsible planning and ownership of outcomes.

Objectives

The continuing professional development of Councillors:

1. Enhances Councillor knowledge and skills in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as elected members and providing good governance to the Shire;
2. Is equitably accessible to all Councillors of the Shire of Augusta Margaret River; and
3. Supports compliance with sections 5.127 and 5.128 of the *Local Government Act 1995* (LG Act).

Application

This policy applies to Councillors in respect of training and continuing professional development, including mandatory training required under s.5.126 of the LG Act, and the CEO in respect of approval of Councillor attendance at training or professional development in accordance with this Policy.

Definitions

Nil

Policy

1. Budget Allocations

The Shire's Annual Budget will include:

1.1 Whole of Council Training and Development

An allocation for Council as a whole, to be used for:

- Councillor Induction, dealt with under Part 2 of this Policy;
- Mandatory Councillor Training, dealt with under Part 3 of this Policy, and
- Council Capacity Building, dealt with under Part 4 of this Policy.

1.2 Councillor Professional Development

An allocation for each Councillor to be used for individual Continuing Professional Development, as specified under Part 5 of this Policy. Councillors may select training and

professional development to be funded from this allocation, subject to approval in accordance with this Policy.

Unexpended allocations at the end of a financial year will not be carried forward to the next financial year.

Any professional development proposal that exceeds an individual Councillor's allocation will be referred for Council decision. Alternatively, the Councillor may choose to privately fund any shortfall. This will not be eligible for reimbursement from a future budget allocation.

2. Councillor Induction

Following each election, the Shire will conduct a comprehensive induction program, providing newly elected Councillors with information that will support them to understand Councillor roles and responsibilities; legislative obligations; personal responsibilities; and strategic direction of the Local Government. Continuing/previously elected Councillors are encouraged to participate in nominated elements of the induction program, to assist in fostering a team culture and to refresh their understanding.

3. Mandatory Councillor Training

Councillors are required to complete the Councillor Essentials Course within 12-months from the day on which they are elected, unless exempt under Regulation 36 of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*. Councillors should confirm with the CEO whether they are eligible for an exemption.

The Shire will provide newly elected and re-elected Councillors with information on training options from which the Councillor may select according to their availability. The Shire will make the necessary arrangements for enrolment.

Councillors who are not yet required to complete the Mandatory Training may still choose to participate, with associated costs attributed to the Whole of Council Training and Development budget allocation.

4. Council Capacity Building

Within a reasonable period after an election, a Council Workshop will be convened to enable Councillors to collaboratively develop a program of Council Capacity Building.

The program developed at the workshop will form the basis for training provided to all Councillors as a group, to encourage Council to focus on continuous improvement in its function as a governing body and to address the outcomes set out in Part 6 of this policy.

The CEO will coordinate training in accordance with the agreed program, with details of dates and delivery modes to be determined in consultation with Councillors.

5. Continuing Professional Development

Formats

Eligible Continuing Professional Development formats include, but are not limited to:

- Short courses;
- Training courses;
- Workshops;
- Seminars;
- Conferences;
- Formal qualifications, or individual units or modules as components of formal qualifications associated with the function of local government; and

- Membership of professional development organisation, where the membership incorporates access to Continuing Professional Development.

Providers

Continuing Professional Development should be delivered by industry recognised training providers, peak bodies or professional organisations.

Outcomes

In order to be eligible for approval under this policy, Continuing Professional Development must be relevant to the role of a Councillor, and offer demonstrable benefit to the Council as a governing body, the Shire as an organisation, and the broader community.

This includes Continuing Professional Development that:

- Enhances the understanding of Councillor roles and responsibilities, and/or the role and function of Local Government;
- Assists Councillors to develop knowledge and skills in relation to the strategic objectives of the Shire;
- Enables Councillors to further develop personal and professional skills necessary for excellence in performance of the Councillor role; or
- Supports Councillors in developing and maintaining positive and healthy communication, team culture and relationships, to facilitate excellent teamwork to achieve outcomes that deliver good government for the Shire community.

Eligible Continuing Professional Development activities include:

- WA Local Government Association (WALGA) and Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) conferences.
- Special 'one off' conferences called for or sponsored by WALGA and/or ALGA on important Local Government issues.
- Annual conferences of the major professions in Local Government and other institutions of relevance to Local Government activities.
- Other Local Government-specific training courses, workshops and forums, relating to the outcomes listed above.
- Training relevant to the outcomes listed above offered by accredited organisations.
- Conferences, training, workshops or seminars that address the initiatives and projects identified in the Shire's Strategic Community Plan, Corporate Business Plan or other strategic documents.

Councillors are encouraged to identify and share relevant Continuing Professional Development opportunities with Council and the CEO. The CEO will also identify and inform Councillors of relevant opportunities.

5.1 Application and Approval

Request for approval

Councillors who wish to attend training or professional development may make application by providing the following details to the CEO in writing:

- a) Course or event title, provider or organiser name, location and date;
- b) Copy of, or link to program, course outline or other summary of content;
- c) An outline of the anticipated benefits of attendance, with reference to the eligibility criteria in this policy; and
- d) Total estimated costs including accommodation, travel and sundry expenses.

Applications, including all required details, are to be submitted in reasonable time for registration. Where possible, the Shire will seek to take advantage of reduced prices for early registration.

Approval

Approval for Councillor attendance may be granted by:

- (a) the Chief Executive Officer where the:
 - (i) application complies with this policy;
 - (ii) event is to be held within Australia; and
 - (iii) the Councillor has sufficient funds available in their professional development allocation to meet all costs of attendance.

- (b) resolution of Council where the:
 - (i) application has been refused by the Chief Executive Officer;
 - (ii) application does not comply with this policy;
 - (iii) estimated costs of attendance exceed the available balance of the Councillor's annual professional development allocation; or
 - (iv) event is to be held outside of Australia.

Limitations

Training and continuing professional development is for the purpose of enhancing a Councillor's performance of their role. Therefore, in some instances, approval may not be granted where attendance conflicts with scheduled Council or Committee meetings (i.e. a meeting where important strategic decisions are required or where the meeting may lack a quorum), unless Council has otherwise resolved.

Where attendance at a particular training or professional development event would require an extended absence, no more than two Councillors may attend, unless Council has otherwise resolved.

Approval will not be granted for training or continuing professional development that is scheduled to occur in the last six months of a Councillor's term of office.

5.2 Sharing of knowledge

In order to realise the maximum benefit for the Shire, Councillors will provide a report on their attendance, key features and benefits of the training or professional development within one month after completion. Councillors may include ideas and innovations identified through the professional development for discussion at future Councillor workshops, where the matter relates to the Shire's strategic objectives.

Knowledge sharing may be provided as a presentation or verbal update to an informal Council workshop, or a written report provided to the CEO and circulated to all Councillors. Where relevant, copies of resources obtained at the event may also be provided to the CEO for circulation to all Councillors.

6. Registration, travel and expenses

The Shire will be responsible for the costs associated with training or professional development approved in accordance with this Policy, as detailed in this section.

Online attendance is to be considered the preferred option in line with the Shire's strategic objectives and commitment of reaching net zero carbon emissions for the Shire and community by 2030 (Strategic Community Plan).

5.1 Event Registration and Bookings

Travel, registration fees, and accommodation are to be arranged directly by the Shire administration.

Councillors are not to pay such costs and seek reimbursement, except in the case of an emergency or with CEO prior approval.

5.2 Travel

Travel arrangements are to be by the lowest emissions, most cost effective and reasonably convenient mode. The actual costs of travel to and from the event venue shall be reimbursed by the Shire in accordance with the Councillor Entitlements Policy.

A Councillor may seek approval to travel within Western Australia by private motor vehicle and be reimbursed for vehicle costs in accordance with the Councillor Entitlements Policy. Approval may only be granted where the cost is approximately equivalent to the most cost effective mode of travel.

The Shire may purchase carbon credits to offset emissions associated with the travel as per the Councillor Entitlements Policy.

Air travel is to be by Economy Class at a time that is convenient to the Councillor, shall be arranged by Shire administration, and include the purchase of carbon offsets, as set out in the Councillor Entitlements Policy. As far as is practicable, tickets will be purchased well in advance, and take advantage of available discount fares.

A Councillor may choose to upgrade the mode of travel, however additional costs incurred are to be paid to the Shire by the Councillor before the Shire confirms the booking/s.

5.3 Registration

Registration fees may include, where applicable, event registration, conference program dinners, technical tours and accompanying workshops identified within the event program.

5.4 Accommodation

Reasonable accommodation will be booked for the Councillor for a room at or in close proximity to the event venue and within the expenditure limitations prescribed in the *Determination*.

If it is not reasonable to expect travel to occur on the day of the event, the booking may allow for arrival the day prior to commencement, and departure the day following the close of the event.

A Councillor may choose to upgrade their accommodation standard or extend their visit for personal reasons, however additional costs are to be paid by the Councillor (including any additional associated or travel costs).

5.5 Loyalty Program and Reward Points

Councillors are not to obtain personal benefit from expenditure of Shire funds and must not claim personal frequent flyer or accommodation loyalty points for air travel or accommodation paid for by the Shire.

5.6 Meals and Incidental Expenses

Funding for meals and incidental expenses is to be provided in accordance with the *Determination*.

Meal expenses are to be interpreted as reasonable expenses incurred for the purchase of breakfast, lunch and dinner where these meals are not provided at the event or in travel. When meals are included and have been paid for as part of the registration fee or accommodation costs, claims for alternative meals at venues other than the event will not to be paid by the Shire.

Incidental taxi, economy ride share or public transport modes of transport (i.e. to / from airport, event venue) may be claimed for reimbursement on submission of receipts.

5.7 Travel Insurance – Intrastate, Interstate and International

Subject to policy wording and conditions, Councillors are covered by the Shire's corporate travel protection for the duration of their travel relevant to attendance at the approved event, including any incidental private travel taken either side or during the event.

Councillors should review the conditions of the Shire's corporate travel protection policy and member certificate to determine whether it is adequate for their personal needs and circumstances, and so that the Shire and/or the Councillor can make any necessary alternative arrangements.

5.8 Accompanying persons/entertainment costs

Councillors are responsible and will be required to pay all costs associated with an accompanying person attending an event (including conference dinners and functions).

The Shire may coordinate accompanying person bookings and registrations for travel, accommodation and the event / function, with costs incurred to be paid by the Councillor.

5.9 Booking change / cancellation and non-attendance costs

The Shire will endeavour to maximise Councillor training and development benefits through appropriate budget allocations.

If a Councillor is unable to attend a booked/registered training initiative, they must advise the CEO at the earliest opportunity. Costs incurred for changing, modifying, or cancelling a booking for travel, accommodation, or registration of a training and development initiative at the request of the Councillor are to be attributed to the Councillor's individual allocation.

Where a Councillor does not complete, or withdraws from a training and development initiative they registered for, and costs have been paid upfront, the Councillor is required to reimburse the Shire for 50% of the costs paid towards the initiative.

7. Report on training

The Shire is required to produce a report detailing the training completed by Councillors during each financial year, in accordance with s.5.127 LG Act.

8. Councillor Commitment

Councillors are committed to:

- a. Take a positive approach to identifying opportunities for improvement and professional development.
- b. Prepare for, participate in and complete professional development and training approved/booked under this policy.
- c. Apply the benefits of professional development to fulfilling their Councillor role, including by sharing their knowledge with other Councillors.

- d. Make reasonable efforts to confirm their availability, or otherwise, to the CEO before booking deadlines.
- e. When requested, advise the CEO of alternative dates / times that they would be available to facilitate their participation in training.
- f. Advise the CEO, at the earliest opportunity, if they are unable to attend planned / booked training.

9. Policy Review

In accordance with s.5.128 LG Act, this Policy must be reviewed following each ordinary election. The Shire will ensure the policy review occurs within the first 12-months following each ordinary election.

Relevant legislation

Sections 5.126, 5.127 and 5.128, *Local Government Act 1995*
 Regulations 35 and 36, *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*
 Determination of the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal on Local Government Chief Executive Officers and Elected Members under the *Salaries and Allowances Act 1975*: section 7B

Related documents

Councillor Entitlements Policy
 Councillor and CEO Attendance at Events Policy

Document and version control table			
Responsible Directorate	Corporate and Customer Services		
Contact officer	Governance and Risk Officer		
Adopted / approved by:	Council		
Date of adoption / approval:	24.01.2024	Decision Ref: OM2024/6	
Date of next review	2025 / 2026		
Document No.	N252105	File No.	GOV/38
Version	Date	Decision Ref.	Brief description
1.0	11.5.22	OM2022/74	Combined the previous Councillor Professional Development Policy and Councillor Induction Policy into the one policy.
1.1	24.01.2024	OM2024/6	Review following 2023 LG Elections. Minor amendment to include online training as preferred.