

POL 0049: Elected Member Professional Development

Purpose

To ensure that Elected Members of the Shire of Esperance meet and comply with the prescribed professional development requirements under the *Local Government Act 1995*, and to encourage participation in other professional development, specifically designed to enhance skills and knowledge relating to roles and responsibilities, as an Elected Member.

Scope

This Policy applies to elected members of the Shire of Esperance.

Definitions

Conference: means a gathering within a structured learning environment, or event related to the industry of local government in the form of a conference, congress, seminar, forum and workshop.

Professional Development: defines training, conferences, conventions, congresses, study tours, forums, information sessions, workshops and events related to local government

Practice

Compulsory Training

The *Local Government Act 1995* requires all Elected Members to undertake compulsory training within 12 months of being elected. The Shire of Esperance is required under the *Local Government Act 1995* to adopt and report on compulsory training, and additionally, continuing development for Elected Members of the Shire of Esperance.

Elected Members of the Shire of Esperance must undertake and successfully complete the following prescribed professional development training modules titled "Council Member Essentials" within a period of 12 months from election, unless a prescribed exemption applies -

1. Understanding Local Government;
2. Serving on Council;
3. Meeting Procedures;
4. Conflicts of Interest; and
5. Understanding Financial Reports and Budgets.

All units and associated costs will be paid by the Shire and must be completed within 12 months following election. The training is valid for 5 years.

It is Council's preference that the training is undertaken via the eLearning method which is the most cost-efficient form of delivery. It is acknowledged that there may be Elected Members who prefer to receive training face-to-face and/or opportunities to attend training which is being delivered in the region or in the Perth Metropolitan area.

Ongoing Professional Development

The professional development of Elected Members is an important activity of the Shire to ensure that its decision making is of the highest standard and is the product of informed and ethical debate, by well trained and committed Elected Members, acting in the best interest of the community.

Elected Members are encouraged to nominate to attend other professional development opportunities to enhance and broaden their knowledge of local government issues to support the community.

In order to be eligible for approval under this Policy, professional development must be relevant to the role of an Elected Member, 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:

1. Enhances the understanding of Council Member roles and responsibilities, and/or the role and function of Local Government;
2. Assists Council Members to develop knowledge and skills in relation to the strategic objectives of the Shire;
3. Enables Council Members to further develop personal and professional skills, necessary for excellence in performance of the Council Member role; or
4. Supports Council Members 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 Formal Training Events

The formal training events to which this Policy applies is limited to those conducted by, or organised by, any of the following organisations or individuals -

1. The West Australian Local Government Association (WALGA);
2. Local Government Professionals WA;
3. Accredited training organisations offering training which directly relates to the role and responsibilities of Elected Members;
4. Information sessions organised by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries; or
5. Seminars, training and/or information sessions provided by individuals with a demonstrably strong knowledge of local government in Western Australia.

The following are examples of other professional development opportunities as described above -

1. WALGA WA Local Government Week;
2. Special “one off” conferences sponsored by WALGA or the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries on important local government issues;
3. Annual conferences of major professions of local government;
4. Conferences which advance the development of Elected Members in their role as Councillors; or
5. Conferences of organisations on which an Elected Member has been elected or appointed as a delegate.

Approval of Professional Development

Councillors must submit their application for professional development to the Shire President or Chief Executive Officer. Council Members who wish to attend training or professional development may make application by providing the following details to the CEO in writing -

1. Course or event title, provider or organiser name, location and date;
2. Copy of, or link to program, course outline or other summary of content;
3. An outline of the anticipated benefits of attendance, with reference to this policy; and
4. 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.

The Shire President and Chief Executive Officer have the ability to approve or refuse applications for training or professional development. Considerations for approval include -

1. The costs of attendance including registration, travel and accommodation (if required);
2. The budget provisions allowed and the uncommitted or unspent funds remaining as per the Elected Member Entitlement Policy,
3. Any justification provided by the applicant when the training is submitted for approval;
4. The benefits to the Shire of the person attending;
5. Identified skills gaps of elected members both individually and as a collective;
6. The Elected Member holding a position on the relevant Council Committee that deals with the subject matter of the conference;
7. If no nominees are available from the relevant portfolio or Committee then the nomination will be at the discretion of Council;
8. The current or future strategic direction and activities of the Shire and its priorities as related to the Shire’s Strategic Community Plan;

9. The equity of opportunity and the remaining period of office of the Elected Member concerned including recognition of the number of opportunities already provided to the respective Elected Member; or
10. A maximum of two (2) Councillors attending any one conference (excluding Local Government Week), unless resolved otherwise by Council.

Travel Arrangements

All booking arrangements for conferences and training for Elected Members are coordinated through the Chief Executive's Office.

Bookings allocated to Elected Representatives of the Shire cannot be exchanged, downgraded or rebated. Efforts will be made to modify departure times only.

Bookings will not be revised to include personal travel that is not part of the scheduled conference itinerary. Efforts will be made to upgrade or alter the booking if the Elected Member is personally paying for the additional costs.

The proposed duration of conference or training attendance together with travel time and planned supplementary pre or post conference activities relevant to the Shire of Esperance will be notified to Council or the Chief Executive Officer for confirmation and/or amendment prior to the delegate's departure for the conference or training.

Loyalty Program and Reward Points

Council Members are not to obtain personal benefits 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.

Reporting and Publishing

All Elected Members attending any conference or training are expected to report to Council on the benefits achieved by attending and should make the conference papers available to other Councillors.

A record of conferences or training attended by Elected Members will be maintained by the Chief Executive Officer.

The Chief Executive Officer is to prepare a report each financial year on professional development training completed by Elected Members in the financial year.

This report is to be published on the shire website within 1 month after the end of the financial year to which the report relates.

Conference/Seminar Attendance

This statement applies to all conferences and seminars, in order that Council provides an opportunity for Elected Members to further their knowledge, professional development and to establish industry networks. Council recognises that Elected Members, in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, will be required to represent the Council by attendance at various conferences or seminars.

Attendance

Subject to budgeted funds being available, an allocation of \$4,500 per financial year will be allocated to each Elected Member to attend approved conferences, including interstate and intrastate conferences. The cost of attending Local Government Week and travel and accommodation costs related to attending conferences and seminars will be included within this financial limit. The Budget allocation for Elected Members for Conferences/Seminars, and Travel and Accommodation will be reviewed annually.

Elected Members may be nominated and authorised to attend conferences by -

1. the Council through a resolution passed at a Council Meeting for interstate and/or international conferences; or
2. the Shire President, or CEO acting within delegated authority, for intrastate conferences.

In applying this policy authority is delegated to the CEO to authorise attendance at intrastate conferences and to nominate and authorise a substitute Elected Member to attend any conference in lieu of the person/s approved, if they are unable to attend the conference.

Limitations on Conference Attendance

Elected Members conference attendance will be limited to the annual member allocation amount of \$4,500 and this will be applied to a combination of Local Government Week and other intrastate conferences to the combined maximum value of \$4,500 or alternatively one (1) interstate conference and other intrastate conferences to the maximum combined value of \$4,500. This allowance applies to all conferences but does not include dedicated training courses provided for Elected Members via WALGA or the Department of Local Government, this is determined under the Elected Member Training and Personal Development section of this Policy.

The Council shall have the authority to nominate the Shire President to attend any conference; however, the maximum value shall be 1.5 times the Member's allocation in any financial year.

Elected Member Training Allowance

An annual training allowance of \$3,000 per Elected Member will be available in order for Elected Members to undertake approved training courses for personal development. This allocation is for course fees only and does not include travel and accommodation costs.

Note: course costs for units specified in the Compulsory Training section of this policy are additional to the annual training allowance and will not reduce this balance.

For qualifications relevant to your position which are greater than the annual training allowance, the Shire may contribute up to 75% of the course cost.

Cost for travel and accommodation during approved training will be allocated from the \$4,500 conference allowance.

Conference and Training Costs, Travel and Related 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.

Travel, registration fees and accommodation are to be arranged directly by the Executive Assistant.

Expenses relating to conferences and training as approved, will be paid direct by the Shire. Expenses may include the following items -

3. Airfare;
4. Conference registration;
5. Copy of conference proceedings;
6. Accommodation; and
7. Meals

Incidental expenses include -

1. Travel to and from the conference venue; and
2. Travel to and from all airport destinations.

For each Council delegate authorised to attend a conference, training or seminar in accordance with this Policy, Council would cover direct expenses of such attendances, including the cost of registration, official conference functions/dinners/tours, travel arrangements, accommodation, and reasonable out-of-pocket expenses for the duration of the conference.

Reasonable out-of-pocket expenses would not include excessive in-room charges; mini bar costs; entertaining expenses; meals and drinks where provided for by conference registration; or personal costs such as dry-cleaning or personal care appointments.

Where the conference, training or seminar is held at a hotel, accommodation in the first instance will be sought from that particular hotel, or if not available, from an accommodation provider as near as practicable to the venue.

In the event that accommodation is not onsite, the Shire will reimburse Elected Members any taxi or public transport costs incurred for travel to or from the conference, training or seminar.

The preferred method of travel to and from a conference, training or seminar in Perth or interstate is via air travel. Alternatively, or where air travel is not available, the preferred method of road travel is by Shire provided vehicle. Where an Elected Member chooses to take their own private vehicle to suit personal arrangements, the Shire will -

1. Pay the Elected Member the equivalent of a single return flight to Perth (equivalent to the cost of a Rex Community Fare) for travel by private motor vehicle; or
2. Pay the Elected Member the rate stipulated in the table on page 1 of this Policy where the travel is outside of the Perth metropolitan region (i.e. Kalgoorlie, Ravensthorpe, Norseman etc.).

Where the mode of transport to attend a conference, training or seminar is a motor vehicle, the Shire will pay for parking costs incurred relating to attendance at the conference, training or seminar.

Hire cars will be made available to Elected Members to facilitate their attendance at a conference, training or seminar where the CEO considers it favourable as opposed to utilising taxis or public transport. In this instance parking costs will also be reimbursed.

Where meals are not included as part of the associated conference, training, seminar or accommodation, Elected Members will receive an allowance or reimbursement at the following rates in accordance with the *Public Service Award 1992* -

1. Breakfast \$16.30
2. Lunch \$16.30
3. Dinner \$46.50

Any expenditure over and above these amounts will be at the cost of the Elected Member.

Where the CEO or a Director pays for the costs of a group meal via corporate credit card, those Elected Members in attendance will not be paid the meal allowance referred to in point 8 above.

Elected Member Delegate – Accompanying Person

Where an Elected Member is accompanied at a conference or training course, all costs for or incurred by the accompanying person are at their personal expense and not covered by Council. The exception to this being the cost of shared accommodation, provided there is no increase in accommodation costs from the rate if the elected member attended the event alone, and attending any official conference dinner where partners would normally attend, then the Council would pay that cost.

Sharing of Knowledge

At the next Ordinary Council Meeting following the return from an approved conference, training or seminar, the Elected Member concerned shall provide at least a verbal report on the attendance for the information of other Elected Members. Any written papers or materials should be handed to the CEO for circulation within the organisation.

.....End.....

Document Information

Responsible Position	Executive Assistant
Risk Rating	Medium

Referencing Documents

- *Local Government Act 1995*
- *Public Service Award 1992*

Revision History

Date	Version	CM Reference	Reason for Change	Resolution #	Next Review
Jun 2021	1	D21/20126	New policy	O0621-149	Jun 2022
Jan 2022	2	D21/20126[v2]	Biennial review, no change.	O0122-012	Jan 2024
Jun 2022	3	D21/20126[v3]	Include provisions for high level qualifications.	O0622-148	Jun 2024
Jan 2024	4	D21/20126[v4]	Change references of conferences and training to be professional development, minor rewording and formatting.	O0124-004	Jan 2026