

Support for Councillor Professional Development Policy

Corangamite Shire

July 2021



**CORANGAMITE
SHIRE**

Council Policy



Support for Councillor Professional Development

Introduction

Councillors are committed to undertake training or professional development activities in order to effectively perform the role of a Councillor. Professional development enables Councillors to increase their networks, knowledge and skills and is strongly encouraged.

Corangamite Shire Council strives to seek a balance between the appropriate expenditure of public funds, while at the same time ensuring that the community is represented by well-informed, highly skilled Councillors.

Purpose

This policy provides guidance on the types of professional development supported by Council and the payment of costs incurred by Councillors related to professional development activities undertaken in their official capacity.

Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors representing the Corangamite Shire Council and applies from the date adopted.

The policy should be used by:

- a) Individual Councillors when considering professional development opportunities.
- b) Council when considering requests from Councillors for the payment of costs associated with professional development.
- c) Finance and other related staff in implementing payments for professional development activities.

Definitions

In this policy:

Expenditure means funds paid in support of an activity.

Professional Development

means short courses, conferences, seminars, forums, training, workshops, trade delegations and friendship visits that will assist a Councillor in their broad civic leadership role, in addition to undergraduate and post-graduate studies that is beneficial to both Council and a Councillor for the performance of their role.

References

Local Government Act 2020

Corangamite Shire Councillor Code of Conduct

Policy Detail

Events, Conferences and Seminars

Events, conferences and seminars provide an opportunity for Councillors to receive information on topics related to local government. These may be provided by both government bodies and commercial providers. Some examples of these include the ALGA National General Assembly, ALGA National Roads Congress and the MAV State Conference.

Training, Workshops and Other Professional Development Activities

Professional development activities undertaken by individual Councillors include formal accredited and non-accredited training related to a Councillor's role. Requests for professional development support must have a direct relationship to the role of a Councillor, and support for training with this focus will be prioritised.

Other Events

On occasion, there may be an opportunity for Councillors to attend trade delegations, industry investigations or other types of activities aimed at increasing the profile of Corangamite Shire¹. These activities should be assessed in accordance with the assessment principles prior to support being granted.

Internal Training Opportunities

Where Councillors believe that a significant training or professional development need is required which would benefit all Councillors and is not addressed by publicly available training and development opportunities, internal training and development may be sourced and delivered. Examples of this type of training may include familiarisation with Council activities or procedures, or legislative changes. In these circumstances, Councillors should contact the Chief Executive Officer to discuss the specific training need so that training can be sourced and delivered.

Each year, the Chief Executive Officer will provide Councillors with internal training related to Governance matters or legislative changes, to support Council's commitment to good governance and ethical leadership.

Councillor Induction Program

In addition to professional development opportunities for Councillors, the Chief Executive Officer will determine an induction program for all Councillors, conducted every four years after the election of a new Council. The induction program will meet the mandatory induction requirements prescribed by the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Where a by-election has been held, the newly elected Councillor will individually receive the mandatory induction training.

¹ It is important that any gifts, including travel and accommodation provided at lower or no cost, are appropriately recorded in the Council's Gift Register.

Approved expenditure

Approved expenditure under this policy includes:

- Conference or training registration fees.
- Travel costs, including road travel, flights, public transport or taxis, and car parking fees.
- Accommodation and meals, but not alcohol, directly related to the event, including accommodation from the day prior to the event, and/or the night following the event where travel is problematic.

Other types of reimbursement (e.g. respite carer payments) may be made available under Council's *Councillor Expenses Policy*.

Where a Councillor's partner accompanies a Councillor to a conference, the registration, accommodation and travel arrangements may be organised by Council, with the Councillor to pay the additional costs incurred by Council due to the partner's attendance, including registration fees, travel expenses, meals and accommodation.

Procedure for Approval

The following process will be strictly observed when assessing requests for expenditure for Councillor professional development.

Approval by CEO

The Chief Executive Officer will approve Councillor professional development expenses where it is calculated that the total amount of expenditure on a single professional development opportunity will not exceed \$2500 per Councillor. This assessment will be undertaken using the assessment principles contained in this policy.

Approval by Council resolution

In the event that the proposed expenditure on a single professional development opportunity exceeds \$2500 per Councillor, the expenditure must be approved by a decision of Council. This approval must be subject to the assessment principles contained within this policy.

Assessment Principles

All expenditure by Council on Councillor attendance at any type of professional development activity should be assessed against the following criteria:

Applicability of content to current or future likely future Council issues

1. Does the event provide an opportunity to receive or upgrade relevant and necessary knowledge or skills, directly related to a councillor role?
2. Does the event provide an opportunity to learn key information about an issue of public policy related to the Corangamite community?
3. Does the event have the potential to foster broad economic development opportunities within Corangamite Shire?
4. Does the event provide an opportunity for a councillor to build their networks both within and across sectors, in a way which will be of benefit to the Corangamite community?

Available funds

The annual budget for Councillors' training will be adequate for Councillors to attend annual conferences plus provision for an annual Councillor Workshop and a sum for other Councillor training needs. This budget item is developed in consultation with Councillors and reflects the need to ensure ongoing professional development, while also ensuring that public funds are expended in a responsible manner.

Each individual Councillor does not have a budgeted financial limit for professional development, as training needs may vary and the budget covers all Councillors collectively.

Reporting

Following participation in an event the Councillor is expected to submit a verbal report at the next available Councillor briefing detailing:

- Whether the objectives of the participation were met.
- The benefits to the Councillor, Council and the community.
- The value of future attendance by Council at similar events.

A written report to Council by a Councillor may be required following attendance at national events.

Costs associated with professional development activities undertaken by Councillors will be reported in Council's annual report, as required by local government legislation.

Reference to linked Procedure or Guidelines Council Expenses Policy

Review Date

This policy will be reviewed by Council by January 2025, or earlier if required.

It is considered that this Policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006)*.