



**Yarriambiack**  
SHIRE COUNCIL

# COUNCILLOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND PROGRAM



## Councillor Professional Development Policy and Program

*Yarriambiack Shire Council encourages a working environment which promotes gender equality and models non-violent and respectful relationships.*

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## Chapter 1 – Councillor Professional Development Policy

### 1 Objective

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires Councillors to undertake professional development training at least once annually, beginning in the first full calendar year after being elected. All Councillors must satisfy the obligations set out in the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020 during the duration of their council term.

Professional development training must be completed by 31 December each year, except for an election year when it must be completed by 01 September.

The purpose of this policy is to enhance good governance across Council by providing high-quality learning and development programs for Councillors. It aims to foster the professional leadership development of Councillors and improve their individual knowledge and skills.

### 2 Responsibility

Councillors are required to adhere to the policy and program. The Councillor Conduct Officer (Chief People and Culture Officer) is responsible for implementing the policy and program.

### 3 Policy Statement and Scope

Councils benefit from ensuring Councillors are well trained in their legislative obligations, principles of good governance, compliance with codes of conduct, conflicts of interest and other transparency disclosures and accountabilities.

Councillor professional development commences prior to nomination and continues throughout the four-year term as an elected representative, with a combination of mandatory training prescribed by legislation and discretionary training identified as necessary to the council or councillor.

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires that all Councillors undertake candidate training prior to election (section 256(7)), induction training upon their election (section 32) and ongoing professional development training throughout their term (section 33A). Further, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are required to undertake additional training upon their appointment to that role (section 27A).

The Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020 prescribe the matters that must be included in this training.

For the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, the prescribed matters are:

- Roles and responsibilities;
- Chairing meetings;
- Engagement and advocacy;
- Leadership; and
- Any other matter relating to the role of the Mayor which the Chief Executive Officer has determined should be addressed.

For all councillors (for both induction and ongoing professional development), the prescribed matters are:

- Working together in a Council;
- Decision making, integrity and accountability;
- Community representation;

- Strategic planning and financial management;
- Conduct;
- Land use planning; and
- Any other matter relating to the role of a councillor which the chief executive officer has determined should be addressed.

## 4 Mayoral Induction Program

Upon election to the office of Mayor or Deputy Mayor, the Chief Executive Officer shall provide the Mayor and Deputy Mayor with a program of professional development activities which, if completed within one month after their election as Mayor or Deputy Mayor, will satisfy each Councillor's obligation under section 27A(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The Mayoral Induction Program may be the same for both Councillors, or may differ between Councillors depending on identified learning needs.

The Mayoral Induction Program is subject to change and may be altered by the Chief Executive Officer with reasonable notice provided to Councillors.

Participation in the Mayoral Induction Program is mandatory for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

## 5 Mandatory Candidate Training

Prior to the opening of nominations for Local Council Elections, the Chief Executive Officer will ensure information is provided on the Council website about the process of nomination for election as a Councillor, including the requirement all candidates undertake mandatory candidate training prior to nomination.

The completion of mandatory candidate training is a prescribed requirement under section 256(7) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. Mandatory candidate training is developed and delivered by Local Government Victoria via an online module.

All candidates must provide proof of completion of the training to be eligible for nomination.

## 6 Candidate Support Program

Councils may provide a candidate support program to assist new and potential candidates in developing an introductory understanding of the following matters:

- The local government election process.
- Processes and procedures of nomination.
- Local government legislative and policy fundamentals.
- Codes of Conduct and other forms of accountability.
- Professional Development Mandatory Training requirements.
- Day to day life as a Councillor.

## 7 Councillor Induction Program

Upon election, the Chief Executive Officer shall provide all Councillors with a program of professional development activities which, if completed within four months of taking the oath or affirmation, will satisfy each councillor's obligation under section 32(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The Councillor Induction Program may be the same for all Councillors or may differ between Councillors depending on identified learning needs. The Councillor Induction Program is subject to change and may be altered by the Chief Executive Officer with reasonable notice provided to councillors.

Participation in the Councillor Induction Program is mandatory.

## 8 Regular Councillor Professional Development Program

Each calendar year, the Chief Executive Officer shall provide all Councillors with a program of professional development activities which, if completed during that calendar year, will satisfy each Councillor's obligation under section 33A(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The Councillor Professional Development Program must include:

- Any training that is outlined under the *Local Government Act 2020* as mandatory; and
- At the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer any additional professional development training or activities that they determine to be relevant and important to the professional development needs of their individual Council.

The Councillor Professional Development Program must include:

- Training on the matters prescribed under regulation 6A(2) of the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020; and
- Any matters determined by the Chief Executive Officer under regulation 6A(2)(g) of the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020.

The Councillor Professional Development Program may be delivered by:

- In-house training to a Councillor group (by an external subject matter expert, training provider or by a Council Officer who is a subject matter expert in that area);
- Completion of online training modules;
- Self-directed learning by way of webinars, videos, podcasts or similar.
- Attendance at an external training event, seminar or conference;
- Completion of a recognised qualification; and/or
- Other activities deemed suitable by the Chief Executive Officer.

The Councillor Professional Development Program may be the same for all Councillors or may differ between Councillors depending on identified learning needs.

The Councillor Professional Development Program is subject to change and may be altered by the Chief Executive Officer with reasonable notice provided to Councillors.

## 9 Other Professional Development Training

Additional professional development training will be provided as needed. For instance, training related to the Budget will be conducted during the annual budget review and adoption process, while strategic planning training will be offered when the Council Plan is being reviewed and adopted. The Chief Executive Officer will organise and determine the suitability of other professional development training as required.

Furthermore, each year, the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer can elect to attend the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) conference in Canberra, typically held around June or July. This conference provides an invaluable opportunity for networking, learning, and sharing best practices with peers from other Councils across Australia.

### 9.1 Councillor Training and Development Allowance

Commencing from 2026/27 financial year, each Councillor is provided with an annual allowance of \$2,000(excluding GST if applicable) to support participation in professional development activities. This allowance may be used for training programs, development opportunities, or attendance at conferences. The allocation covers both the cost of the event itself and associated expenses such as accommodation.

For the Mayor, this allowance is extended beyond the standard \$2,000 allocation to ensure adequate support for attendance at conferences, training sessions, and other relevant events that align with the responsibilities of the role.

When a Councillor wishes to undertake any training, development, or conference activity at the Council's expense, the proposed participation must be presented during a Council Forum. Approval for the expenditure is granted by the Mayor following this presentation. This process ensures transparency, alignment with Council objectives, and appropriate use of allocated funds.

In circumstances where a Councillor elects not to proceed with attendance at a training program, professional development activity, or conference for which Council has already confirmed registration and incurred associated costs, and where a refund—whether full or partial—is not obtainable, the total non-recoverable amount will be charged to the Councillor's annual professional development allowance. This requirement ensures appropriate stewardship of Council funds and accountability for expenditure once committed.

Councillors are also welcome to attend any event, conference, or professional development activity at their own expense, should they wish to pursue opportunities beyond the allocated allowance.

## 10 Resourcing Councillor Professional Development

The Councillor Professional Development Program will be funded within the Council's annually adopted Budget, and the individual Councillor allowances for training, development, and conference attendance will also be incorporated into this budget allocation.

## 11 Councillor Participation

Participation by Councillors in the Mayoral Induction Program, Councillor Induction Program and Councillor Professional Development Program is required to satisfy sections 27A(1), 32(1) and 33A(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* respectively. Every effort shall be made by Councillors to participate in the training programs.

The Chief Executive Officer must provide reasonable assistance to a Councillor to enable them to access the training programs.

Councillors shall notify the Chief Executive Officer without delay if they are unable to participate in any component of the training programs. The Chief Executive Officer will, to the extent practicable, make alternative arrangements to enable the training program to be completed (for example, by arranging a make-up training session to be offered to that Councillor).

## 12 Certification

Following each training program, the Chief Executive Officer will prepare a Training Certification Statement which sets out the training undertaken by each Councillor during that calendar year. The statement shall include for each element of the training program:

- The date(s) the training was undertaken;
- The prescribed matters included, with reference to regulation 4A, 6 or 6A(2) of the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020;
- The detailed matters addressed; and
- The manner of delivery.

If the Training Certification Statement shows that all required elements have been completed, it shall be presented to each Councillor for certification. The Councillor must then make a written declaration that they have completed the training program by signing and dating the Training Certification Statement in the presence of the Chief Executive Officer.

If the Training Certification Statement shows that not all required elements have been completed, it may not be presented to the Councillor for certification until such time as the outstanding elements are completed.

If a Councillor fails to make the written declaration:

- For the Councillor Induction Program, four months from the taking of the oath or affirmation of office (subject to s32(4A) of the *Local Government Act 2020*);
- For the Mayoral Induction Program, one month from election as Mayor Or Deputy Mayor; or
- For the Councillor Professional Development Program, 31 December each year except for an election year when it must be completed by 01 September (subject to s33A(6) of the *Local Government Act 2020*);

the Chief Executive Officer shall withhold the payment of the Mayoral, Deputy Mayoral and/or Councillor allowance until such time as the relevant training program has been completed and the written declaration has been made.

The failure to make the written declaration by the deadline for any of the applicable training programs results in the withholding of the entire Mayoral, Deputy Mayoral and/or Councillor allowance (i.e. – a Mayor who fails to complete the Mayoral induction declaration but does complete the Councillor induction and Councillor professional development declarations will have their full allowance withheld – they do not 'revert' to receiving the Councillor allowance.

Upon the completion of the training program and the making of the declaration, payment of allowances shall resume, and any amounts withheld shall be paid.

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## Chapter 2 - Councillor Professional Development Program

### 13 Program Statement and Scope

A professional development program is a structured and continuous process aimed at enhancing and expanding the professional knowledge, competence, skills, and effectiveness of individuals in the workplace through targeted development activities. In local government, an effective professional development program ensures that Councillors address any skills or knowledge gaps, enabling them to make the best possible contributions to their communities.

Councillors have a duty to act in the best interests of the local community. To fulfill this responsibility, they must understand their role and grasp certain technical aspects, such as strategic planning, budgeting, and good governance. Professional development training is designed to enhance Councillors' skills by ensuring they comprehend their responsibilities and possess the knowledge and abilities needed to excel in their roles.

All Councillors must complete professional development training each year of their term, beginning in the year following their election.

The timing of professional development activities for Councillors will be planned to avoid overloading them with learning activities early in the Council term. This may involve staggering the delivery of training throughout the year. The schedule will reflect the knowledge and skills that Councillors and the Mayor need at different points in the term to effectively perform their roles.

For instance, Council will ensure that Councillors have gained the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively contribute to the review of the Council Plan and other strategic planning documents before these activities commence.

The Yarriambiack Shire Council's Councillor Professional Development Program has been developed around the following themes outlined regulation 6A(2) of the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020.

The themes to be covered are:


- Working together in a Council;
- Decision making, integrity and accountability;
- Community representation;
- Strategic planning and financial management;
- Conduct;
- Land use planning; and
- Any other matters relating to the role of a Councillor which the Chief Executive Officer has determined should be addressed.

### 14 Councillor Professional Development Program 2024-2028

The Councillor Professional Development Program 2024-2028 (the Program) is subject to change based on availability and its effectiveness in each respective year. The Program serves as a preliminary framework for scheduling training and development activities.

In relation to the ongoing professional development training for Councillors, the mandated modules under regulation 6A(2) of the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020 will be conducted annually during August and/or September.

 Mandated

 Chief Executive Officer has determined should be addressed.

Module	2024 Induction	2025	2026	2027	2028
Working together as a Council					
Decision-making, integrity and accountability					
Community Representation					
Strategic Planning and Financial Management					
Conduct					
Land Use Planning					
Mandatory Mayoral Training					
Roll Out of IT Equipment and Training					
The Role of a Councillor					
The Role of a Mayor and Deputy Mayor					
The Role of the Chief Executive Officer					
Culture Awareness Training					
Operational versus Strategic Roles					
Councillor and Staff Interaction Protocols					
Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles					
Misconduct					
Internal Arbitration Process					
Conflicts of Interest					
Confidentiality					
Delegations and Authorisations					
Media Protocols					
Community Asset Committees and Committee Structures					
Gender Equality					

Module	2024 Induction	2025	2026	2027	2028
BGLC and Traditional Owners					
Initial Interest Reports and Biannual Interest Returns					
Meeting Procedures, and Council's Governance Rules					
Risk Management Training					
Priority Projects and Community Action Plans					
Community Engagement					
Working with Children Legislative Compliance					
Occupational Health and Safety and Psychosocial Hazards					
CEO Employment and Remuneration					
Working Together as a Team					
Financial Induction Program					
Capital Works Budget Planning					
Service Level Plans					
Ascetic Modelling					

**Note:** This table is intended as a guide and should not be considered definitive, except for the mandated topics highlighted in orange.

## 15 Definitions

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Candidate Support Program	Means a program of preliminary training designed to educate potential local government candidates about Council election processes, local government legislative and policy fundamentals and life as a Councillor.
Councillor Induction Program	Means the program of professional development activities provided to all Councillors upon election under Part 7 of this policy.
Councillor Professional Development Program	Means the program of professional development activities provided annually to all Councillors under Part 8 and Chapter 2 of this policy.
Mandatory Candidate Training	Means the course developed and delivered online by Local Government Victoria which is a pre-requisite for nomination as a Councillor.

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Mayoral Induction Program	Means the program of professional development activities provided to the Mayor and Deputy mayor under Part 4 of this policy.
Training Certification Statement	Means the statement prepared by the Chief Executive Officer and presented to Councillors for signing under Part 12 of this policy.
Training Program	Means the Mayoral Induction Program, Councillor Induction Program and/or Councillor Professional Development Program.

## 16 Related Documents

### Council Documents

- Council Expense Policy
- Model Councillor Code of Conduct

### Legislation

- Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020
- *Local Government Act 2020*

## 17 Consistency with Governance Principles Local Government Act 2020

Governance Principle	Section of policy where covered
a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law;	Section 1 and 3
b) priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations;	Section 1 and 3
c) the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted;	Section 1 and 3
d) the municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making;	Section 1 and 3
e) innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued;	The Policy as a whole
f) collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought;	Section 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9

Governance Principle	Section of policy where covered
g) the ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured;	Section 1, 3 and 9
h) regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making;	Section 1 and 3
i) the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.	Section 1 and 3

In giving effect to the overarching governance principles, a Council must take into account the following supporting principles—

<b>Community Engagement Principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope.</li> <li>• Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation.</li> <li>• Participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement.</li> <li>• Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement.</li> <li>• Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making.</li> </ul>
<b>Comment:</b>	<p>This Policy reinforces Council’s commitment to community engagement principles by ensuring that Councillors receive appropriate training and are fully equipped to understand and apply community engagement protocols and statutory requirements. Through this approach, Councillors are better prepared to engage effectively with the community in a manner that is consistent, transparent, and aligned with legislative and organisational standards.</p>
<b>Public Transparency Principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act.</li> <li>• Council information must be publicly available unless— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the information is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act; or</li> <li>(ii) public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated.</li> </ul>
<b>Comment:</b>	<p>This Policy upholds the principles of public transparency by clearly outlining the training and development activities that Councillors are expected to undertake, as well as those already completed. By making this information accessible, the Policy ensures accountability and fosters community confidence in the professional development of elected representatives.</p>
<b>Strategic Planning Principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An integrated approach to planning, monitoring and performance reporting is to be adopted.</li> <li>Strategic planning must address the Community Vision.</li> <li>Strategic planning must take into account the resources needed for effective implementation.</li> <li>Strategic planning must identify and address the risks to effective implementation.</li> <li>Strategic planning must provide for ongoing monitoring of progress and regular reviews to identify and address changing circumstances.</li> </ul>
<b>Comment:</b>	<p>This Policy aligns with strategic planning principles by ensuring that the development of the Community Vision is comprehensive and well-informed. It equips Councillors with an understanding of available resources and how they can be effectively allocated, provides training on risk management processes, and fosters awareness of monitoring and reporting requirements associated with strategic planning. Through these measures, Councillors are better prepared to make informed decisions that support long-term community objectives.</p>
<b>Financial Management Principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revenue, expenses, assets, liabilities, investments and financial transactions must be managed in accordance with a Council's financial policies and strategic plans.</li> <li>Financial risks must be monitored and managed prudently having regard to economic circumstances.</li> <li>Financial policies and strategic plans, including the Revenue and Rating Plan, must seek to provide stability and predictability in the financial impact on the municipal community.</li> <li>Accounts and records that explain the financial operations and financial position of the Council must be kept.</li> </ul>
<b>Comment:</b>	<p>This Policy supports the financial management principles by providing an indication of budget requirements for Councillor professional development, induction training, and Mayoral training. It establishes transparency around anticipated costs and ensures that resources are allocated responsibly. In addition, the Policy specifies a dedicated allowance of \$2,000 per Councillor for discretionary training and development activities outside of mandated programs or training deemed necessary by the Chief Executive Officer. This approach promotes fiscal accountability while enabling Councillors to pursue relevant learning opportunities that enhance their capacity to serve the community effectively.</p>

<b>Service Performance Principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services should be provided in an equitable manner and be responsive to the diverse needs of the municipal community.</li> <li>• Services should be accessible to the members of the municipal community for whom the services are intended.</li> <li>• Quality and costs standards for services set by the Council should provide good value to the municipal community.</li> <li>• A Council should seek to continuously improve service delivery to the municipal community in response to performance monitoring.</li> <li>• Service delivery must include a fair and effective process for considering and responding to complaints about service provision.</li> </ul>
<b>Comment:</b>	This Policy aligns with the service performance principles by clearly defining the learning and development requirements for Councillors. These requirements are recognised as a core service within our service level plans, ensuring that Councillors have access to the necessary training and resources to effectively fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

## 18 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in conjunction with its associated procedures every three years.

From time to time, circumstances may require minor administrative changes to be made to this Policy. Where an update does not materially alter this Policy, such a change may be made administratively and need not be considered and adopted by Council.

Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this policy, or the legal responsibilities of any member of the community, it must be considered and adopted by Council, or by the Chief Executive Officer in reliance on delegated authority.

### Council Approved Policy

<b>Policy Adopted:</b>	Ordinary Meeting 30 June 2025	Minute Page 81 Item 15.16
<b>Policy Reviewed:</b>	Ordinary Meeting 25 February 2026 Version 1.1	Minute Page [number] Item [number]



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