



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT REFORM ►► TRANSFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Universal Training Frequently Asked Questions

Why is universal training being introduced?

- Council members have a unique and challenging role.
- They oversee multi-million dollar budgets and make difficult decisions that impact the well-being of communities.
- Unlike board members they are not selected for the role based on their knowledge and experience, but on their leadership and willingness to contribute to the community.
- Once elected, they are required to make decisions on matters as diverse as planning applications, budgeting, rates, support for community organisations, long term planning for the district and the recruitment of and employment relationship with the CEO.
- They are also expected to understand and comply with meeting procedures, conflicts of interest and codes of conduct.
- This reform is key to providing council members with the skills and knowledge to perform their role as leaders in their district.

What is included in the elected member training?

There are five foundational units that make up the course *Council Member Essentials*:

- Understanding local government
- Serving on council
- Meeting procedures
- Conflicts of Interest
- Understanding of financial reports and budgets.

How long will it take a council member to complete the training?

- The training is expected to take approximately 5 days over the course of a year.

Who will deliver the training?

The training providers will be:

- Western Australian Local Government Association;
- South Metropolitan TAFE; and
- North Metropolitan TAFE.

Not all training modules will be available from all providers immediately, though it is expected that all providers will offer all five modules in face-to-face or online mode by February 2020. Individual training providers will release the modules when they have developed the material.

What will the elected member training cost?

- Training providers should be contacted for the proposed schedule of fees.

Who will have to do the training?

- Every council member will be expected to undertake the training within 12 months of being elected commencing from the October 2019 local government elections, unless an exemption applies.
- The training is valid for five years so a council member will only be required to undertake the training at every second election.

What exemptions apply?

- Council members will not have to undertake the course *Council Member Essentials* if, in the previous five years, they have passed
 - the *Council Member Essentials* course, or
 - 52756WA — *Diploma of Local Government (Elected member)*.
- In addition, current council members who have passed the course titled *LGASS00002 Elected Member Skill Set* within the last 5 years prior to being elected and before 1 July 2019 will be exempt.

Can anyone do the training?

- Yes. There will be no restriction on who can complete the training.
- The unit on understanding financial statements and budgets may be of interest to ratepayers' association members, for example.
- A candidate may wish to complete the meeting procedures unit before being elected.

Will there be RPL for the training?

- No, but certain exemptions will be available (refer to earlier question).

If a council member is an accountant, will they have to do the unit on 'understanding financial reports and budgets'?

- Yes, they still need to understand local government specific requirements.
- They will, however, be able to do the online module which will enable them to complete it at their own pace and focus on the new material.

If I'm an existing council member why do I have to do the training?

- Legislation and best practice changes overtime.
- Repeating the training allows both for a refresh of the principles as well as updates on aspects that have changed.
- By having self-paced training options available, continuing council members will be able to quickly refresh their understanding and focus on the changes.

How will community members know if their councillor has completed the training?

- Local governments will be required to report annually on who has completed training and publish this on the local government's website. The report will list each council member and the training each has completed in that financial year. This will include both the *Council Members Essentials* course where applicable and continuing professional development in line with the local government's policy.
- Most council members value increasing their skills and knowledge in relation to this important role they undertake.
- It is believed that community and peer pressure will ensure that all councillors will complete the training.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

What is this new CPD requirement?

- Each council is now required to prepare an adopt a policy covering the continuing professional development of its council members.
- The policy is to be published on the local government's website.

What should be considered by the council when developing the policy?

- The content of the policy will be determined by the council.
- It should include developmental opportunities for each councillor and a statement of the extent of payment by the local government.
- In deciding the content of the policy, council should consider:
 - the strategic direction of the local government,
 - skills gaps among the council as a whole, and
 - the needs of individual councillors.

How often should the policy be reviewed?

- The policy must be reviewed after each ordinary election to take into account the needs and skill sets of the new councillors and can be reviewed more frequently.

Are there going to be any restrictions on who can deliver continuing professional development to councillors?

- No, each council will decide what type of training is appropriate for their councillors.