

Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Framework

Statement

DHSV acknowledges that transparent and accountable practices are vital to maintaining the Victorian community's trust in the public sector, and its confidence that public resources are being used responsibly and appropriately. DHSV undertakes to manage offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality in accordance with the requirements of the VPSC Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy and has adopted the culture of 'thanks is enough'.

Purpose

As a public entity, how DHSV manages offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality is a practical demonstration of our integrity, impartiality and accountability. It allows the community, business associates and Government to be confident that DHSV makes decisions and provides advice free of favouritism, influence and conflicts of interest.

The Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Framework sets out DHSV's position on:

- responding to offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality; and
- providing gifts, benefits and hospitality.

This Framework is intended to support individuals and DHSV to avoid conflicts of interest and maintain high levels of integrity and public trust.

DHSV has issued this Framework to support behaviour consistent with the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees (the Code). All employees are required under clause 1.2 of the Code to comply with this document.

Scope

This Framework applies to all employees and other workers including Board members, individuals, contractors, consultants and any individuals or groups undertaking activity for or on behalf of DHSV.

Definitions

Employees and other workers	Include any person carrying out work for DHSV as a director, committee member, employee, contractor, agent, student, clinical demonstrator or volunteer
Benefits	<p>Benefits include preferential treatment, privileged access, favours or other advantage offered to an individual. They may include invitations to sporting, cultural or social events, access to discounts and loyalty programs, and promises of a new job.</p> <p>The value of benefits may be difficult to define in dollars, but as they are valued by the individual, they may be used to influence the individual's behaviour.</p>
Conflicts of Interest	
Actual	There is a real conflict between an employee's public duties and private interests.
Potential	An employee has private interests that could conflict with their public duties. This refers to circumstances where it is foreseeable that a conflict may arise in future and steps should be taken now to mitigate that future risk.
Perceived	The public or a third party could form the view that an employee's private interests could improperly influence their decisions or actions, now or in the future.
Gifts	Gifts are free or discounted items and any item that would generally be seen by the public as a gift. These include items of high value (e.g. artwork, jewellery, or expensive pens), low value (e.g. small bunch of flowers) and consumables (e.g. chocolates, vouchers and gift cards). Fundraising by public sector organisations

that is consistent with relevant legislation and any government policy is not prohibited under the minimum accountabilities.

Hospitality

Hospitality is the friendly reception and entertainment of guests. Hospitality may range from light refreshments at a business meeting to expensive restaurant meals and sponsored travel and accommodation.

Fundraising

Raising money in a way that does not breach the minimum accountabilities because it occurs under a fundraising policy that is consistent with relevant law, government policy and codes of conduct issued by the VPSC.

Official Gifts and Items

Official gifts and official items (for example a culturally significant gift from an official delegation) are an exception to our usual 'thanks but no thanks' approach, however these still must be declared.

Principles

This Framework has been developed in accordance with requirements outlined in the minimum accountabilities for the management of gifts, benefits and hospitality issued by the Victorian Public Sector Commission. These minimum accountabilities are binding under Instruction 3.4.11 of the Standing Directions 2018.

In 2018, the VPSC updated the policy guide (formerly framework) and supporting resources. These updates assist organisations to implement the policy and highlight the importance of considering conflicts of interest and reputational risks when offering or receiving gifts, benefits or hospitality.

In 2024 the VPSC published further updates focused on the minimum accountabilities, which are incorporated into this Framework.

DHSV is committed to and will uphold the following principles in applying this framework.

Impartiality

Individuals have a duty to place the public interest above their private interests when carrying out their official functions. They will not accept gifts, benefits or hospitality that could raise a reasonable perception of, or actual, bias or preferential treatment. Individuals do not accept offers from those about whom they are likely to make business decisions.

Accountability

Individuals are accountable and

- do not, for themselves or others, seek or solicit gifts, benefits and hospitality.
- declare all non-token offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality valued at \$50 or more (whether accepted or declined);
- refuse all offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality that:
 - are money, items used in a similar way to money, or items easily converted to money
 - give rise to an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest
 - could reasonably be seen as a bribe or other inducement;
 - may adversely affect their standing as a public official or which may bring their public sector employer or the public sector into disrepute; or
 - are non-token offers without a legitimate business benefit.
 - declining non-token offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality, or where an exception applies under this policy, seeking approval to accept the offer; and
 - the responsible provision of gifts, benefits and hospitality.

Individuals with direct reports are accountable for overseeing management of their direct reports' acceptance or refusal of non-token gifts, benefits and hospitality, modelling good practice and promoting awareness of gifts, benefits and hospitality policies and processes.

DHSV very strongly encourages all staff to return gifts upon receipt of the gift where possible.

DHSV has a process during the festive season where it advises all key suppliers that gifts of any value will not be accepted and if delivered, returned to the organisation giving the gift.

Providing Gifts Benefits and Hospitality

DHSV will not provide gifts, benefits or hospitality to persons or organisations except for Official Gifts and hospitality arranged in accordance with the internal catering procedure or in connection with official business and authorised by the relevant Executive Sponsor.

Integrity

Individuals strive to earn and sustain public trust through providing or responding to offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality in a manner that is consistent with community expectations. Individuals will refuse any offer that may lead to an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest.

DHSV will actively support and protect employees who speak up in good faith about a possible breach of this Framework.

Risk-based approach

DHSV, through its policies, processes and Audit and Risk Committee, will ensure gifts, benefits and hospitality risks are appropriately assessed and managed. Individuals with direct reports will ensure they are aware of the risks inherent in their team's work and functions and monitor the risks to which their direct reports are exposed.

Communication

DHSV will publish this Framework on the DHSV website.

DHSV will publish its register of reportable gift offers received on its website.

DHSV will regularly communicate with staff about compliance with the Framework.

DHSV will report annually to the Audit & Risk Committee about the administration and quality control of its gifts, benefits and hospitality framework, processes and internal register.

Aligned Documents

Risk Management Policy

[Register of Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality](#)

Related External Documents

Minimum accountabilities for the management of gifts, benefits and hospitality (see Instructions supporting the Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance)

Public Administration Act 2004

Code of conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees

Code of conduct for Directors of Victorian Public Entities

Victorian Public Sector Commission's Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy and [Policy Guide](#).

Approved by

Board

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26 Sept 2024

Document owner

Chief Financial Officer

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