



Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality

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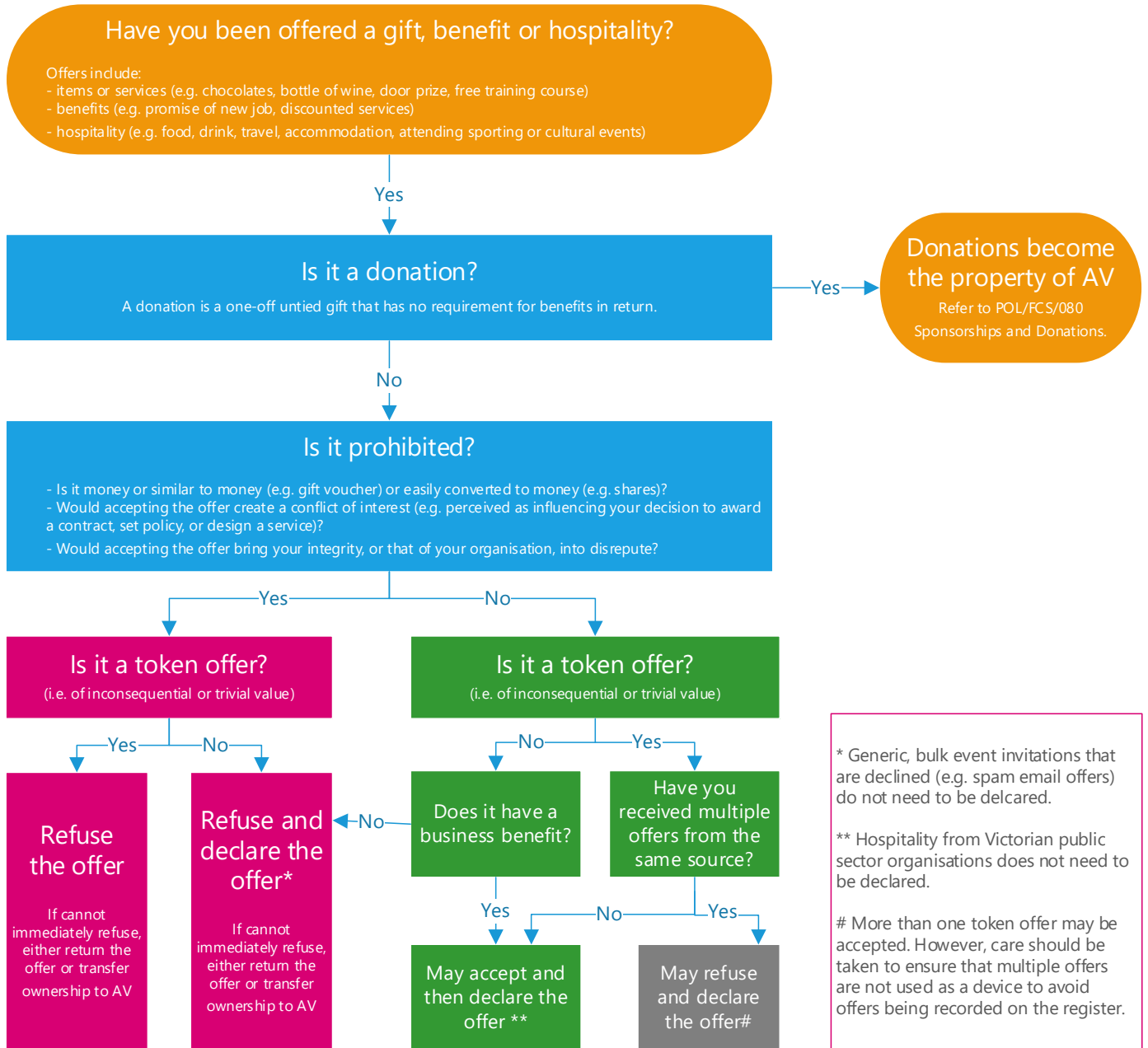
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Responding to gifts, benefits and hospitality

AV staff do not seek offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality.





Overview

1. Purpose

This document sets out the minimum accountabilities for managing gifts, benefits and hospitality within Ambulance Victoria (AV). The policy supports behaviour consistent with the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees, which applies to all AV staff. It aims to support individuals and AV to avoid conflicts of interest and maintain high levels of integrity and public trust.

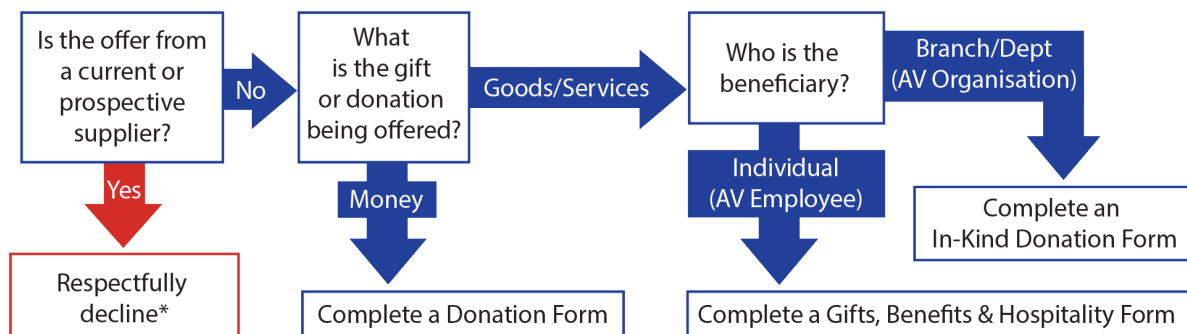
2. Scope

This policy applies to all workplace participants, including Board Directors, Board Committees, Executives, employees, temporary contractors engaged through employment agencies, consultants, casuals, and volunteers. These will be collectively referred to as 'staff' from here on.

2.1 Fundraising

Fundraising by AV that is consistent with relevant legislation and any government policy is **not** prohibited under the minimum accountabilities. Donations and sponsorships requirements are detailed in POL/FCS/080 Sponsorships and Donations.

For clarity, a donation is defined as a one-off untied gift that has no requirement for benefits in return. Donations will become the property of AV.



*there may be some exceptions to declining the gift. Please liaise with the Gifts team to determine the outcome.

2.2 Board Directors

This policy recognises that the Board Directors at AV may hold external portfolio appointments or are engaged in other non-AV related interests.

If in the course of those appointments or interests, should gifts, benefits and hospitality be offered to a Board Director that would give rise to a potential, actual or perceived conflict of interest (which may directly impact the Board Director's role at AV, or AV as an organisation) or reputational risk, then this is to be referred to the Board Chair for guidance or pre-approval, or to Legal Counsel in the event of the conflict of interest arising for the Board Chair.

3. Responsibility

This policy is issued under the authority of the Authorising Officer, the Chief Executive, and our organisational delegate is the Executive Director Strategy and Engagement.

Role	Responsibility
Chief Executive Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Assure the following minimum set of accountabilities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Model good practice and foster a culture of integrity. b) Establish, implement and review AV policies and processes for the effective management of gifts, benefits and hospitality that comprehensively address minimum accountabilities. c) Establish and maintain a register for gifts, benefits and hospitality offered to public officials that, at a minimum, records sufficient information to effectively monitor, assess and report on these minimum accountabilities. d) Communicate and make clear within AV that a breach of the gifts, benefits and hospitality policies or processes may constitute a breach of binding codes of conduct and may constitute criminal or corrupt conduct and may result in disciplinary action. e) Establish and communicate a clear policy position to business associates on the offering of gifts, benefits and hospitality to staff, including possible consequences for a business associate acting contrary to the organisation's policy position. This must take into consideration any whole of Victorian Government supplier codes of conduct. f) Report at least annually to the Audit and Risk Committee on the administration and quality control of its gifts, benefits and hospitality policy, processes and register. This report must include analysis of AV's gifts, benefits and hospitality risks (including repeat offers from the same source and offers from business associates), risk mitigation measures and any proposed improvements. g) Publish AV's gifts, benefits and hospitality policy and register on AV's public website. The published register should cover the current and the previous financial year and be published within four months of each financial year.
Executive Director Strategy and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Register (Gifts Register). • Oversight and assurance of gifts, benefits and hospitality management. • Contact officer for conflict of interest queries. • Communicate AV's policy on the offering and provision of gifts, benefits and hospitality to employees, contractors, consultants and other business associates • Deliver targeted training to high-risk areas/roles. • Annual review of this policy.
Audit and Risk Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Gifts Register and the Policy on an annual basis.





Policy

4. Policy principles

Transparent and accountable practices are vital to maintaining the Victorian community's trust in our service, and confidence that public resources are being used responsibly and appropriately.

As public officials, our management of any offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality is a practical demonstration of our integrity, impartiality, and accountability. It allows the community, our service partners and Government to be confident that we make decisions and provide services free of favouritism, influence, and conflicts of interest.

More broadly than the minimum accountabilities related to Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality (GBH), Ambulance Victoria is committed to and will uphold the following principles in GBH management.

- **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.

AV staff will not accept or provide offers of gifts, benefits, hospitality, financial sponsorships or donations from or to current or prospective suppliers, unless this offer is not exclusive to AV and is available to the general public or broader community and does not present any actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest.

- **Accountability**

Individuals are accountable for:

- declaring all non-token offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality;
- 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 policy and processes.

- **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.

- **Risk-based approach**

AV, through its policies, processes and audit 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.



5. Minimum accountabilities

AV's business operating model is displayed below. It intends to ensure we enable and deliver the AV Strategic Plan Vision 2022, to support continued reform in providing Victorians with a world-class emergency ambulance service over the next five years.

The following minimum accountabilities are binding under the *Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance*.

Table 1: Minimum accountabilities for gifts, benefits and hospitality

<p>AV staff offered gifts, benefits and hospitality:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not, for themselves or others, seek or solicit gifts, benefits, and hospitality. • Refuse all offers of gifts, benefit, and hospitality that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • may adversely affect their standing as a public official or which may bring AV or the public sector into disrepute; or • are non-token offers without a legitimate business benefit. • Declare all non-token offers (valued at \$50 or more) of gifts, benefits and hospitality (whether accepted or declined) on AV's gift register and seek written approval from their manager or delegate to accept any non-token offer. • Refuse bribes or inducements and report inducements and bribery attempts to the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate, who should report any criminal or corrupt conduct to Victoria Police or the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission. •
<p>AV staff providing gifts, benefits and hospitality:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that any gift, benefit or hospitality is provided for a business purpose in that it furthers the conduct of official business or other legitimate organisational goals or promotes and supports government policy objectives and purposes. • Ensure that any costs are proportionate to the benefits obtained for AV and the State and would be considered reasonable in terms of community expectations. • Ensure that when hospitality is provided, individuals demonstrate professionalism in their conduct, and uphold their obligation to extend a duty of care to other participants.



6. Regulatory and policy hierarchy

The following legislations, standards, and policy governance documents are material to this policy.

Legislation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Administration Act 2004
Regulations, Standards and Government Policy Guidelines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance 2016 Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy Framework (issued by Victorian Public Sector Commission) Victorian Public Service Travel Policy
Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> POL/FCS/028 Conflict of Interest POL/PAC/043 Code of Conduct POL/FCS/080 Sponsorships and Donations FRA/BRD/001 Financial Delegations and Authorities Framework
Procedure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PRO/FCS/068 Conflict of Interest PRO/FCS/069 Entertainment and Official Meeting
Supporting document and tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FOR/CEO/003 Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Declaration Public, and internal gifts registers

All documents are subject to change. In the event of any inconsistency, legislation and/or regulations take precedence.





Management of offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality

This section sets out the process for accepting, declining, and recording offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality. Any exceptions to this process must have the prior written approval of the Integrity Officer.

7. Conflict of interest and reputational risks

When deciding whether to accept an offer, individuals should first consider if the offer could be perceived as influencing them in performing their duties, or lead to reputational damage. The more valuable the offer, the more likely that a conflict of interest or reputational risk exists.

8. GIFT test

Figure 1: GIFT test

G	Giver	<p>Who is providing the gift, benefit or hospitality and what is their relationship to me?</p> <p>Does my role require me to select suppliers, award grants, regulate industries or determine government policies? Could the person or organisation benefit from a decision I make?</p>
I	Influence	<p>Are they seeking to gain an advantage or influence my decisions or actions?</p> <p>Has the gift, benefit or hospitality been offered to me publicly or privately? Is it a courtesy or a token of appreciation or a valuable non-token offer? Does its timing coincide with a decision I am about to make?</p>
F	Favour	<p>Are they seeking a favour in return for the gift, benefit or hospitality?</p> <p>Has the gift, benefit or hospitality been offered honestly? Has the person or organisation made several offers over the last 12 months?</p> <p>Would accepting it create an obligation to return a favour?</p>
T	Trust	<p>Would accepting the gift, benefit or hospitality diminish public trust?</p> <p>How would the public view acceptance of this gift, benefit or hospitality? What would my colleagues, family, friends, or associates think?</p>

9. Requirement for refusing offers

Individuals should consider the GIFT test at Figure 1 and the requirements below to help decide whether to refuse an offer. Individuals are to refuse offers:

- likely to influence them, or be perceived to influence them, in the course of their duties or that raise an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest;
- could bring them, AV or the public sector into disrepute;
- made by a person or organisation about which they will likely make or influence a decision (this also applies to processes involving grants, sponsorship, regulation, enforcement or licensing), particularly offers:
 - made by a current or prospective supplier;

- made during a procurement or tender process by a person or organisation involved in the process.
- likely to be a bribe or inducement to make a decision or act in a particular way;
- that extend to their relatives or friends;
- of money, or used in a similar way to money, or something easily converted to money;
- where, in relation to hospitality and events, the organisation will already be sufficiently represented to meet its business needs;
- where acceptance could be perceived as endorsement of a product or service, or acceptance would unfairly advantage the sponsor in future procurement decisions;
- made by a person or organisation with a primary purpose to lobby Ministers, Members of Parliament or public sector organisations; or
- made in secret.

Some staff perform roles that call for greater scrutiny. Staff involved in purchasing goods and services (including but not limited to Procurement and Commercial, Property Services, and Supply Services staff) must not accept gifts from contractors and suppliers, and must remain vigilant particularly when a tender has been advertised. AV will not provide offers of gifts, benefits or hospitality, financial sponsorships or donations from or to current or prospective suppliers, unless the offer is exclusive to AV and is available to the general public or broader community and does not present any actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest. A Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality form must be completed even if the gift is declined.

If an individual considers they have been offered a bribe or inducement, the offer must be reported to the Chief Executive Officer or the Integrity Officer, who should report any criminal or corrupt conduct to Victoria Police or the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission.

Suggested ways to decline gifts

The easiest way to decline a gift will usually be to:

- mention that AV's GBH policy prevents us from accepting gifts.
- note that AV's GBH policy applies universally and isn't specific to this particular instance (i.e. the refusal is not personal); and
- suggest showing appreciation for AV's work by making a donation directly to AV.

10. Token offers

A token offer is an offer of a gift, benefit or hospitality that is of inconsequential or trivial value to both the person making the offer and the individual. It may include promotional items such as pens and note pads, and modest hospitality that would be considered a basic courtesy, such as light refreshments, finger food or a modest meal incidental to or part of a meeting or conference. In all cases the hospitality offered should be proportionate to the occasion. Modest hospitality received as part of official business is not a reportable gift.

The minimum accountabilities state that token offers cannot be worth more than \$50.

Individuals may generally accept token offers without approval or declaring the offer on the AV register, as long as the offer does not create a conflict of interest or lead to reputational damage.

Token gifts under the value of \$50 such as stationeries, coffee mugs, caps, USB flash drives, show bags and so forth that are handed out to everyone attending a conference, trade show or expo may generally be accepted. These items are not given as a personal gift for use outside the business



environment and a reasonable person would not perceive token gifts as items designed to influence or win favours. Staff do not need to declare and report token gifts on the Gifts Register.

Frontline staff may accept token gifts such as chocolates, flowers, or movie tickets from patients if they are valued at less than \$50. These gifts should clearly be an expression of appreciation for services provided, without any perception of intention to influence AV, its staff or its delivery of service. AV staff must exercise professional judgement and assess contexts. It is always acceptable to decline a non-token offer.

11. Non-token offers

Individuals can only accept non-token offers if they have a legitimate business benefit. All accepted non-token offers must be approved in writing by the individual’s manager or organisational delegate, recorded in the AV register and be consistent with the following requirements:

- It does not raise an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest or have the potential to bring the individual, AV, or the public sector into disrepute; and
- There is a legitimate business reason for acceptance. It is offered in the course of the individual’s official duties, relates to the individual’s responsibilities and has a benefit to AV, the public sector or the State.

Individuals may be offered a gift or hospitality where there is no opportunity to seek written approval from their manager prior to accepting. For example, they may be offered a wrapped gift that they later identify as being a non-token gift. In these cases, the individual must seek approval from their manager within five (5) business days.

Where the gift would likely bring you or AV into disrepute, AV should return the gift. If it represents a conflict of interest for you, AV should either return the gift or transfer ownership to the organisation to mitigate the risk.

12. Recording non-token offers of gifts, benefits, and hospitality

All non-token offers, whether accepted or declined, must be recorded via completion of FOR/CEO/003 Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Declaration, submitted to gifts@ambulance.vic.gov.au. The business reason for accepting the non-token offer must be recorded in the register with sufficient detail to link the acceptance to the individual’s work functions and benefit to AV, the public sector or State.

Individuals should consider the following examples of acceptable and unacceptable levels of detail to be included in the AV register when recording the business reason.

Figure 2: Examples of unacceptable and acceptable detail when recording business reasons

Unacceptable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Networking” • “Maintaining stakeholder relationships”
Acceptable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Individual is responsible for evaluating and reporting on the outcomes of AV’s sponsorship of Event A. Individual attended Event A in an official capacity and reported back to AV on the event.” • “Individual presented to a visiting international delegation. The delegation presented the individual with a cultural item worth an estimated \$200. Declining the gift would have caused offence. The gift was accepted on behalf of AV and ownership transferred.”

A decision to accept a gift offer must be approved by the authorised persons as follows:



Intended recipient	Authorised persons for approval
AV staff excluding Executive Director Strategy and Engagement, Chief Executive, Board and Board committees	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement
Executive Director Strategy and Engagement	Chief Executive
Chief Executive	Board Chair
Board and Board committee members	Board Chair
Board Chair	Audit and Risk Committee Chair

This approval can be obtained by completing the Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Declaration Form.

Based on completed forms, the Executive Director Strategy and Engagement will maintain an internal register of gift, benefits and hospitality declarations. Access to the register is restricted to relevant persons within AV.

AV's Audit and Risk Committee will receive a report at least annually on the administration and quality control of the gifts, benefits and hospitality policy, processes and register. The report will include analysis of AV's gifts, benefits and hospitality risks (including multiple offers from the same source and offers from business associates), risk mitigation measures and any proposed improvements.

The public register will contain a subset of the information detailed in AV's internal register.

13. Ownership of gifts offered to individuals

Non-token gifts with a legitimate business benefit that have been accepted by an individual for their work or contribution may be retained by the individual where the gift is not likely to bring them or AV into disrepute, and where their manager or the Executive Director Strategy and Engagement has provided written approval. Staff must transfer to AV official gifts or any gift of cultural significance or significant value.

Monies donated online or by mail, or given to branches, are considered donations and will become the property of AV and receipted to donated funds.

AV may decide to donate ceremonial or significant gifts, or the proceeds from their sale to charity.

13.1 When representing AV

When AV staff attend a conference either as a participant or speaker or apply for an award in recognition of their AV work, they are representing AV. AV has usually paid for the employees' costs; their time, labour or accommodation. Any benefits accruing from the activities belong to AV. This includes door prizes, fees for speaking, and financial grants. AV will record any revenue from fees and grants on the public ledger.

13.2 Ceremonial gifts

Ceremonial gifts are official gifts provided as part of the culture and practices of communities and government, within Australia or internationally. Visiting or visited delegates may offer ceremonial gifts on behalf of their organisations to AV staff. Ceremonial gifts may be accepted on behalf of AV, and will become the property of AV irrespective of value. The receipt of ceremonial gifts must be recorded via FOR/CEO/003 Gifts Benefits and Hospitality and recorded on AV's gifts register and asset register, but this information does not need to be published online. Items of cultural significance may be offered to an appropriate public institution such as the Melbourne Museum,



National Gallery of Victoria, or similar organisation. AV may decide to donate other significant gifts or the proceeds from their sale to charity.

13.3 Hospitality provided by Victorian public sector organisations

Victorian public sector organisations may provide hospitality to stakeholders, as part of their functions. When offered hospitality by a Victorian public sector organisation, individuals should consider the requirements of the minimum accountabilities.

Accepted hospitality offered by a Victorian public sector organisation as part of official business does not need to be declared or reported, where the reason for the individual's attendance is consistent with AV's functions and objectives and with the individual's role.

13.4 Promotional offers

Promotional offers are sometimes extended by an organisation or business wishing to give discounted or corporate offers of goods and/or services to AV staff. The offer may be published by AV upon completion of review by the Executive Director Strategy and Engagement to ensure there is no conflict of interest or potential probity concern. Offers that are not exclusive to AV and are provided to the general public are not considered to be conflict of interest.

All aspects of the offer will be managed by direct liaison between the organisation providing the offer and AV staff. AV makes no representations or warranties of any kind with respect to the accuracy of value for money of the promotional offers. It is the responsibility of the individual employee to assess the offer and determine whether they wish to participate. In any case, AV must not be seen as endorsing or promoting any products, services, or organisation in association with the promotional offer on any external facing media.

13.5 Bendigo Bank and AV Auxiliaries

Bendigo Bank is a supplier to AV as banking services provider to some AV Auxiliaries, despite not being a State Purchase Contract banking services provider to the state government's Central Banking System. In February 2022, the Department of Treasury and Finance approved an exemption to allow all AV Auxiliaries to hold monies raised through their fundraising activities and community donations in bank accounts outside of the Central Banking System. Bendigo Bank has charitable arm offering grants, scholarships and community focused appeals which are accessible to charities and Not for Profit entities. Such grants and donations from Bendigo Bank's charitable arm are generally acceptable despite Bendigo Bank being a supplier of banking services to some AV Auxiliaries.

13.6 Alternatives to sponsored travel and accommodation

Travel for government business may be undertaken if it has legitimate business benefit for the public, AV's objectives, or the health service in general. The relationship between recipient and donor must be assessed to ensure that it does not give rise to any perceived, actual or potential conflict of interest.

Otherwise, travel alternatives (e.g. conference calls, video calls) must be pursued. Such alternatives can deliver savings and support AV's environmental objectives to pursue resource efficient technology. Refer to PRO/FCS/090 Business Travel.

AV staff may receive offers of sponsored travel and accommodation to attend a conference or to participate in an industry familiarisation tour. Such offers should be declined because of the potential for a conflict of interest. However, if attendance at the conference or the industry familiarisation tour is considered to have a legitimate business benefit and is in the public interest, AV may pay for the travel and accommodation as an alternative.



Management of the provision of gifts, benefits and hospitality

This section sets out the requirements for providing gifts, benefits and hospitality.

14. HOST test

Figure 3: HOST test

H	Hospitality	<p>To whom is the gift or hospitality being provided?</p> <p>Will recipients be external business associates, or individuals of the host organisation?</p>
O	Objectives	<p>For what purpose will hospitality be provided?</p> <p>Is the hospitality being provided to further the conduct of official business? Will it promote and support government policy objectives and priorities? Will it contribute to staff wellbeing and workplace satisfaction?</p>
S	Spend	<p>Will public funds be spent?</p> <p>What type of hospitality will be provided? Will it be modest or expensive, and will alcohol be provided as a courtesy or an indulgence? Will the costs incurred be proportionate to the benefits obtained?</p>
T	Trust	<p>Will public trust be enhanced or diminished?</p> <p>Could you publicly explain the rationale for providing the gift or hospitality? Will the event be conducted in a manner which upholds the reputation of the public sector? Have records in relation to the gift or hospitality been kept in accordance with reporting and recording procedures?</p>

15. Requirements for providing gifts, benefits and hospitality

Gifts, benefits and hospitality may be provided when welcoming guests, to facilitate the development of business relationships, further public sector business outcomes and to celebrate achievements.

When deciding whether to provide gifts, benefits or hospitality or the type of gift, benefit or hospitality to provide, individuals must ensure:

- any gift, benefit or hospitality is provided for a business reason that furthers the conduct of official business or other legitimate organisational goals, or promotes and supports government policy objectives and priorities;
- that any costs are proportionate to the benefits obtained for the State, and would be considered reasonable in terms of community expectations (the 'HOST' test at Figure 3 is a good reminder of what to think about in making this assessment); and
- it does not raise an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

16. Containing costs

Individuals should contain costs involved with providing gifts, benefits and hospitality wherever possible, and should comply with the financial probity and efficient use of resources guidance

outlined in the *Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees/Directors of Public Entities*. The following questions may be useful to assist individuals to decide on the type of gift, benefit or hospitality to provide:

- Will the cost of providing the gift, benefit or hospitality be proportionate to the potential benefits?
- Is an external venue necessary or does the organisation have facilities to host the event?
- Is the proposed catering or hospitality proportionate to the number of attendees?
- Does the size of the event and number of attendees align with intended outcomes?
- Is the gift symbolic, rather than financial, in value?
- Will providing the gift, benefit or hospitality be viewed by the public as excessive?

17. Catered functions

Figure 4: Catering requirements

Type of catered function	Requirements
Christmas Parties / Celebrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff may attend the annual Chief Executive-endorsed Christmas celebration, paid for by AV, to recognise their contributions over the year. • All other Christmas events (e.g. team, branch, or department lunches or dinners) are to be paid for by individual staff.
Planning Days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning activities are crucial for effective service delivery and fostering team culture. • Catering for planning days will provide sustenance to staff and will exclude alcohol.
Divisional, Departmental or team meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings support effective communication of priorities and alignment with AV strategic plans. • Catering for these meetings will provide sustenance to staff, with options such as employee contributions (e.g. baked goods), informal catering (e.g. affordable items from bakeries or supermarkets), or, as the least preferred option, formal catering.
New Starter Welcomes and Farewells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catering for new starter welcomes and farewells will be organised through employee contributions, individual payments, or staff collections. • Catered events at AV premises may be arranged to recognise long-standing staff upon retirement. • Meals (e.g. lunches, dinners) outside of AV premises are to be paid for by individual staff.

18. Providing gifts to staff

AV may recognise significant achievements and provide gifts as part of the following:

- Reward and recognition programs or events; or
- Celebrating length of service milestones and/or retirements.

A gift, such as a card and/or flowers, may be provided by AV in the event of employee illness, death or if a close family member of an employee passes away.

Gifts for events such as farewells, birthdays, marriages, or the birth of children must not be purchased using AV funds.



19. Gifts, benefits and hospitality between staff

It is noted that at times, staff may want to provide a gift or hospitality to another AV colleague to mark a celebration (Christmas/ birthday/ milestone), or to show their appreciation. Gifts, benefits and hospitality from one AV employee to another AV employee (not funded by AV) can generally be accepted, unless it gives rise to an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest (for example gift to recruitment panel member where the gift giver is a candidate for the position).

Supporting information

20. Breaches and misconduct

Disciplinary action consistent with the relevant industrial instrument and legislation, including dismissal, may be taken where an individual fails to adhere to this policy. This includes where an individual fails to avoid wherever possible or identify, declare and manage a conflict of interest related to gifts, benefits and hospitality in accordance with POL/FCS/028 Conflict of Interest Policy.

Actions inconsistent with this policy may constitute misconduct under the *Public Administration Act 2004*, which includes:

- breaches of the binding *Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees/Directors of Public Entities* such as sections of the Code covering conflict of interest, public trust and gifts and benefits; and
- individuals making improper use of their position.

For further information on managing breaches of this policy, please contact Senior Manager Enterprise Risk and Assurance.

AV will communicate its policy on the offering and provision of gifts, benefits and hospitality to contractors, consultants, and other business associates. Those identified as acting inconsistently with this policy may be subject to contract re-negotiation, including termination.

21. Speak up

Individuals who consider that gifts, benefits and hospitality or conflict of interest within the AV may not have been declared or is not being appropriately managed should speak up and notify their manager or the Executive Director Strategy and Engagement. Individuals who believe they have observed corrupt conduct in their colleagues may also make a protected disclosure directly to the Independent Based-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC).

AV will take decisive action, including possible disciplinary action, against individuals who discriminate against or victimise those who speak up in good faith.

22. Contact for further information

A conflict of interest resulting from the acceptance of a gift, benefit or hospitality is not always clear to those who have them. Individuals who are unsure about accepting a gift, benefit or hospitality, or the application of this policy, should ask their manager, Senior Manager Enterprise Risk and Assurance or the Executive Director Strategy and Engagement for advice.



23. Definitions

Term	Definition
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. 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.
Bribes	Money or other inducements given or promised to employees to corruptly influence the performance of their role. Bribery of a public official is an offence punishable by a maximum of ten years imprisonment.
Business associate	An individual or body that Ambulance Victoria has, or plans to establish, some form of business relationship with, or who may seek commercial or other advantage by offering gifts, benefits or hospitality.
Ceremonial gifts	Official gifts provided as part of the culture and practices of communities and government, within Australia or internationally. Ceremonial gifts are usually provided when conducting business with official delegates or representatives from another organisation, community or foreign government. Ceremonial gifts are the property of Ambulance Victoria, irrespective of value, and should be accepted by individuals on behalf of AV. The receipt of ceremonial gifts should be recorded on the register but does not need to be published online.
Conflict of interest	Conflicts may be: Actual: there is a <u>real conflict</u> between an employee's public duties and private interests. Potential: an employee has private interests that <u>could conflict</u> with their public duties. This refers to circumstances where it is foreseeable that a conflict may arise in future and steps should be taken to mitigate that future risk. Perceived: The public or a third party could reasonably <u>form the view</u> that an employee's private interests could improperly influence their decisions or actions, now or in the future.
Donation	A one-off untied gift that has no requirement for benefits in return. Donations will become the property of AV.
Gifts	Free or discounted items or services and any item or service 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), consumables (e.g. chocolates) and services (e.g. painting and repairs). Fundraising by public sector organisations that is consistent with relevant legislation and any government policy is not prohibited under the minimum accountabilities.
Hospitality	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.
Legitimate business benefit	A gift, benefit or hospitality may have a legitimate business benefit if it furthers the conduct of official business or other legitimate goals of AV, the public sector, or the State.
Non-token offer	A gift, benefit or hospitality that is, or may be perceived to be by the recipient, the person making the offer or by the wider community, of more than inconsequential value. All offers worth more than \$50 are non-token offers and must be recorded on a gift, benefit and hospitality register.
Public official	Public official has the same meaning as section 4 of the <i>Public Administration Act 2004</i> and includes public sector employees, statutory office holders and directors of public entities.
Public register	A record, preferably digital, of a subset of the information contained in a register, for publication as required by the minimum accountabilities.



Term	Definition
Register	A record, preferably digital, of all declarable gifts, benefits and hospitality.
Reportable gifts	Gifts that must be recorded, typically on a gifts declaration form and/or a gifts register. At a minimum, reportable gifts include accepted gifts, benefits and hospitality that exceed a nominal value. They could also include gift offers of any value, whether they are accepted or not. The gifts may have been offered to an employee directly or extended to them as a guest of their partner or other close relation.
Token offer	A gift, benefit or hospitality that is of inconsequential or trivial value to both the person making the offer and the recipient (such as basic courtesy). The minimum accountabilities state that token offers cannot be worth more than \$50.



Document name	GIFTS, BENEFITS AND HOSPITALITY		
Applies to	All AV staff		
Document no.	POL/FCS/033	Stored:	Content Manager POL/FCS/033
Version	18.0	Review:	<input type="checkbox"/> Annual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3-Yearly
Division	Strategy and Engagement		
Responsible Executive	Executive Director Strategy and Engagement		
Responsible Manager	Senior Manager, Enterprise Risk and Assurance		
Key stakeholders: (including external)	Consulted:	To be informed:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Policy Advisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff 	
Review date	By 02 September 2027 or in accordance with applicable legislative or regulatory changes.		
National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards	To be completed by the National Standards Accreditation Lead:		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NSQHS standards are NOT applicable		

Version control and change history

Version	Date approved	Date superseded	Amendment
15.0	31 May 2021	27 June 2022	Annual review. Inclusion of: flowchart to help assess whether offer is gift or donation; information relating to gifts between AV staff. Clarification that offers can be accepted by suppliers if they are non-exclusive to AV and do not create COI. Additional sections relating to Bendigo Bank and AV Auxiliaries.
16.0	27 June 2022	5 June 2023	Annual review.
17.0	5 June 2023	2 September 2024	Comprehensive revision to harmonise with VPSC GBH model policy. Organisational delegate changed from Executive Director Corporate Services to Executive Director Strategy and Engagement.
18.0	2 September 2024	Current	

