

COVID-19 Response Plan - 2020

Introduction

The Construction Training Fund acknowledges the critical importance of having a formalised and documented Pandemic Response Plan (Plan). This Plan has been endorsed and approved by the BCIT Board. The Plan has been formulated and is in accordance with all directives issued by the Pandemic Coordination Unit in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Public Sector Commission, Public Sector Labour Relations, WA Police and the Health Department.

Staff well-being and safe work practices

In order to comply with all directives on public safety to minimize the spread of an infectious disease, CTF staff have been provided with the following:

1. Compliance with directives regarding the stipulated social distance between workers at their workstations in the CTF office.
2. A directive to ban attending all external meetings and only having limited numbers of staff attend any internal meeting and while using staff amenity areas.
3. Instructions on how to improve personal hygiene and change behaviours that will minimise the spread of the pandemic including how to wash hands.
4. Hand sanitizer and other disinfectants have been made available throughout the office and staff are being encouraged to use these often after touching surfaces.
5. All notices from WA Health on best practice behaviours in regard to social distancing and hygiene practices to minimise contracting COVID-19.
6. Instructions to stay at home if they are sick or if another family member living in the same residence is sick.
7. Permission to work from home if the staff member has a medical certificate from their medical practitioner recommending, they work from home or their partner also has an underlying medical condition that places them at risk.
8. Circulate all information and updates from PSC and other government agencies regarding COVID-19 including advising them about the specific website for government employees so they can access the very latest information.
9. Continue to provide staff with access to CTFs normal Employee Assistance Program, however, the delivery services from the provider may change.

Business Continuity

In order to ensure there is continuity in operating the CTF business, the following will be enacted once the directive has been received from DPC or another authorized government authority.

1. CTF stakeholders can conduct their normal business transactions through the levy and claims portals. CTF staff can process all business transactions using online business systems including the processing of levy receipts and employer subsidy and training claim payments.
2. CTFs telephone system has been configured to redirect to all external incoming calls directly to staff mobiles when staff are working from home so all inquiries will be attended to as per normal.

3. Staff will be told when they can work from home. A working-from-home simulation test was done during the week commence Monday 16 March 2020. This test demonstrated all staff can work from home and were able to access all necessary business applications without any issues and maintain business continuity for CTFs stakeholders.
4. Staff were issued an Occupational Health & Safety questionnaire to conduct a comprehensive assessment of their place of work in their place of residence to ensure there were no factors that could impact on their health.
5. Most of the issues identified through the OH&S survey related to inadequate office home equipment so CTF staff will take equipment from the office home to use for the duration of their working-from-home.
6. CTF uses Microsoft Teams and this software will used to conduct teleconferencing meetings between external stakeholders as well as managers and staff. Staff have been trained to use MS Teams.
7. CTF managers are developing a 12-week plan of specific task that can be allocated to staff. If the COVID-19 crisis extends beyond 12 weeks, staff may be asked to take annual or long-service leave.

Communications Plan

It is important CTF remains in close contact with all key stakeholders before, during and after the pandemic. To enable this, CTF has engaged a specialist communications consultant on a contract for an initial period of three months with the option to extend to six months to undertake the following:

1. Develop a communications plan which has specific messaging which is relevant to all groups of stakeholders and is aligned to the new Strategic Plan objectives and priorities.
2. Develop material for web content, social media, media management, reporting, newsletter and liaising with external stakeholders to enable a two-way communication channel between CTF and its stakeholder groups.
3. Responsibilities of this position will include but not be limited to writing and editing communications materials, assist in the refining the CTF communications and marketing strategy, managing written photographic and video materials in archives and databases and briefing and managing external graphic designers and photographers as well as presentations for the Board and CTF management.
4. Send targeted messages to the building and construction industry which are focused on complying with economic and health requirements to ensure the industry remains an 'essential' service under the Federal Governments classification. The economic messages will focus on available incentives being provided by Federal and State Governments to assist employers to maintain their apprentices and other incentives that are being offered from other sources including CTF and ABBTF.
5. CTF will ensure all stakeholders are notified they can access services from Mates-in-Construction if they are experiencing any mental health issues.

CTF Incentives

Under guidance from the BCIT Board, CTF management has started to investigate funding options that might be made available to employers to ensure apprentice contracts are not suspended. The internal work by CTF staff will be completed by Tuesday 7 April so the Board can consider the options at a meeting on 8 April. This will include:

1. Liaison with the Department of Training and Workforce Development and the Australian Apprentice Support Network to assess what if any, additional payments are being considered for employers of apprentices.
2. Identifying existing funding being provided to employers for apprentices.
3. Undertake financial modelling of all funding options.
4. Factor in decisions being taken now by companies regarding their intent to proceed or place on hold large projects and how this may impact on levy payments and CTFs available funding over the next 12-18 months.
5. Conduct a telephone survey of 800 employers across all trades to obtain feedback of the impact of COVID-19 on their business and how CTF can assist. Questions include:
 - a. How long do you estimate you can retain your apprentice?
 - b. What are your training preferences?
 - c. How can CTF assist with incentive processes e.g. bring forward payments, monthly payment or additional payment?
 - d. What hygiene practices is your business undertaking?
 - e. Are you aware of the government assistance packages?
6. Provide a briefing paper of the results of the survey and recommendations to the BCIT Board.

Recovery

Based on what eventuates with COVID-19, CTF will develop a restoration plan as soon as practical depending on the circumstances and impact of this pandemic. This will include undertaking the following analysis and steps:

1. Analysing the impact of COVID-19 on the building and construction industry and particularly on sub-contractors and apprentices and upskilling training.
2. Identifying areas of greatest needs to return the industry to normal operations as soon as practical within the legislative remit of the CTF.
3. Develop stimulus options for the Board to consider to further stimulate and support the industry.
4. Develop a marketing and promotional campaign and materials using a variety of media and marketing channels to inform industry stakeholders of all existing and any new incentives to stimulate the engagement of apprentices and/or encourage training for existing and new entrants to the industry.
5. Ensure CTF staff are trained and have all the information relating to any new incentives or subsidies.
6. Monitor and review statistics to determine if any new incentives are having an impact.
7. Review marketing strategies to identify the most effective campaigns and the media channels being used.