

Sunshine Coast Council

Terms of Reference

Sunshine Coast Young Leaders Academy 2026

Introduction

The Sunshine Coast Young Leaders Academy (Academy) provides an opportunity for participants to develop essential leadership skills and gain a deeper understanding of participatory and community leadership practices, enabling them to drive sustainable and positive change in their communities.

Youth Plan Implementation

In 2026, the Academy will contribute to implementing some of the actions from the proposed *Thriving Futures: Sunshine Coast Youth Plan 2026-2031*.

The action plan will outline actions for Council to implement between 2026 and 2031 that focus on the challenges and opportunities for young people in our region. The Academy will be involved in contributing towards implementing several of these actions.

Guiding principles

Academy members will participate according to the following guiding principles:

- Acting in the public interest
- Achieving Council's vision
- Complying with the law and Council policies
- Being accountable to Council and the community.

Membership

Membership eligibility

Academy members must:

- Be aged from 16 to 24 years (inclusive) on 31 December 2025
- Live, work or study within the Sunshine Coast local government area
- Commit to attending regular meetings and engagement activities throughout 2026 (see **Time Commitment** section below).

Council will make every effort to ensure that barriers to participation are minimised or eliminated. People with support needs are encouraged to apply.

Number of members

The Academy will have a maximum of twelve (12) members.

Membership terms

Members will be appointed for a one-year period commencing in February 2026.

Active members in 2026 will have the opportunity to be mentors for the Academy in 2027.

Appointment of members

Council will invite nominations to join the Academy via an expression of interest process that is shared widely by Council. Nominations must be received by the expression of interest closing date (10 November 2025).

Selection of members will be based on their demonstrated contribution to their community and their desire to grow healthy leadership practices. Selection will be based on the submitted expression of interest form and interview discussions.

Membership will be determined by a selection panel of Council representatives. Final appointment will be approved by the Manager Community Planning & Development and /or Director Community Strengthening

Council will consider diversity and inclusion when shortlisting applicants. Council will also aim to include young people from across the region to ensure different communities are represented.

A reserve list of shortlisted applicants will be developed to fill any vacancies that may arise.

Responsibility of members

Members are expected to commit and participate productively and meaningfully to the shared goals of the Young Leaders Academy, both during and between meetings. Productive membership includes:

- Listening with attention to the ideas, opinions and concerns of other members
- Speaking with intention that will add value to group goals and purpose
- Contributing to the overall function and wellbeing of the group.

Dispute resolution

Consensus may not be reached among members and will not be required before progressing with other matters.

When it comes to conflict or breaches of terms, every effort will be made by the Youth Development Officer to reconcile and respond to concerns or conflict in a way that seeks the betterment of both the member and the Academy as a whole.

Code of conduct

Council's [Employee Code of Conduct](#) applies to all members of the Academy.

Confidentiality and public comment

From time to time, the Academy will review information not yet available to the Sunshine Coast community. In these instances, members will be required to maintain confidentiality by not taking notes or discussing the topic outside the Academy membership. It will be made clear what information is confidential.

Official public comment on the Academy's discussions may only be made by Council representatives with agreement from Council's Communication Branch.

Members of the Academy will be asked for permission to use their image in photography and videography.

Time commitment

A full-day retreat will take place on Saturday 7 February 2026.

Regular meetings will take place fortnightly during February, March and April 2026 (five meetings in total). Each meeting will be held for approximately 3 hours from 5.00pm to 8.00pm and will involve dinner. Fortnightly meeting dates listed below:

18 February
4 March
18 March
1 April
22 April

One meeting per month will be held during other months (May–November 2026). Again, each meeting will be held for approximately 3 hours from 5.00pm to 8.00pm and will involve dinner.

Resignation of members

Members can resign at any time by notifying Council's Youth Development Officer in writing.

Removal of members

Membership can be revoked by Council's Youth Development Officer, with approval of the Manager Community Planning & Development.

Members may be removed from the Academy due to:

- Non-attendance, without reasonable excuse, to two or more consecutive meetings
- Unresolved conflict, or
- Serious breaches of the guiding principles, Council's Code of Conduct or a serious contravention of the *Local Government Act 2009* and *Local Government Regulation 2012*.

Council will work to resolve issues and provide members with reasonable opportunities to be heard before being removed.

The decision regarding removal from the Academy will be communicated in writing by the Manager Community Planning & Development.

Remuneration

Participation in the Academy is free, voluntary and unpaid. Council will not provide any payment or compensation for the time spent by members in regular meetings or for activities between meetings.

Members may be reimbursed for some out-of-pocket expenses related to specific activities.

Reimbursement may include expenses to attend regular meetings where prior agreement has been arranged. This will be formulated on an individual basis. A written agreement will detail the extent of expenses, dependent on the travel requirements.

Evaluation and review

Informal feedback will be gathered from members regarding the content of the meetings and ideas for future discussions.

Personal and professional development opportunities will be formally evaluated by members pre and post participation in the Academy. This will be achieved via written feedback, survey or polls, answering key assessment criteria to review relevance, participant enjoyment and learnings.

Annual review will include an analysis from attendees, assessing topics covered throughout the year and significant events or undertakings.

A review of the Academy will be carried out to identify successes, challenges and areas of improvement for the group, along with general planning for the successive year.