



Australasian Fire and Emergency  
Service Authorities Council

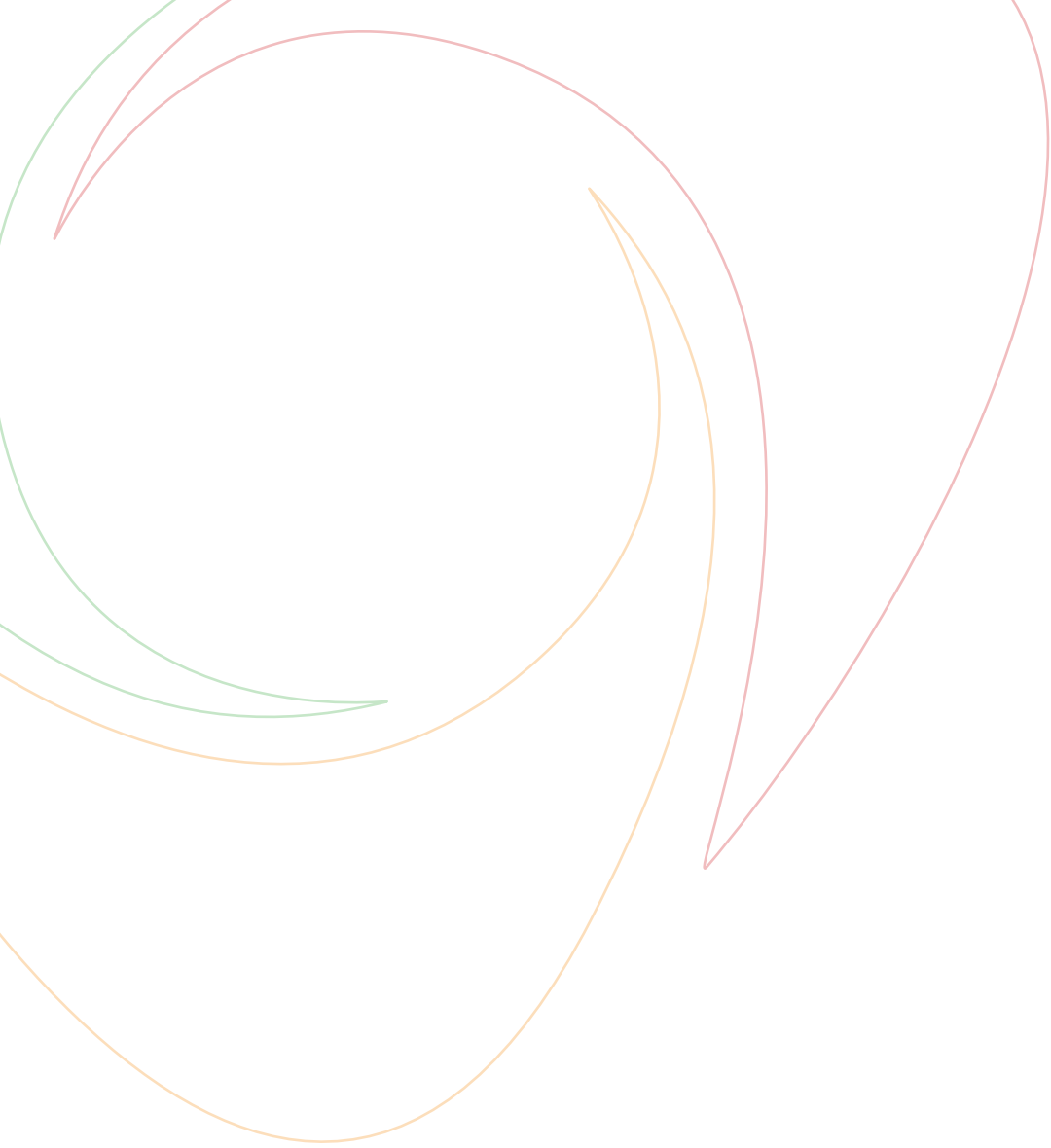


# Professional Development Events Guideline for Implementation

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Promoting opportunities for interaction, thinking and the adoption of  
new knowledge across the emergency services sector



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# Introduction

The AFAC Knowledge Management approach and strategy "Thinking Requires Knowledge: An approach to Knowledge Creation" contributes to Goal 4 of the AFAC Strategic Plan: A culture that nurtures and supports knowledge creation and evidence based decision making. The Strategy was endorsed by the AFAC Council in April 2009, and AFAC is commencing the establishment of knowledge management as a sustainable and important AFAC business activity.

Concurrently, the Bushfire CRC's Strategy and Plan for research adoption (endorsed in February 2009) identified an approach that combines product development with stakeholder engagement, supported by an underlying philosophy of adult learning. This approach acknowledges that the products of research can be presented in a number of forms. Broadly speaking these have been grouped into: user friendly written summaries (i.e. Fire Notes); a web-based repository; seminars/forums/workshops; and specific tangible products such as software, books or guidelines.

Actions to commence implementation of the AFAC approach to Knowledge Management fall into four categories: People, Content, Process and Technology. Clearly the Bushfire CRC research will provide a significant input of Content.

Importantly there is also a strategic alignment between the Bushfire CRC seminars, forums and workshops as research adoption vehicles, and AFAC's Professional Development Events.

AFAC will build on the Bushfire CRC's events program and is developing high-quality professional development events for members, and at times, non-members. These events will provide opportunities for people to come together to share knowledge and thinking and to facilitate the creation of a knowledge transfer approach across the industry. Other initiatives will focus on the use of new technologies as a mechanism

to facilitate knowledge exchange, such as through the use of webinars, podcasts and online forums.

These events will provide opportunities to guide, coach, inform and mentor others in the process of knowledge sharing, and will deliberately support the adoption of new research from the Bushfire CRC among member agencies.


Professional development events will include Master Classes, Seminars, Forums, Conferences, Clinics, Workshops and Knowledge Cafés. Each has a different purpose and design.

The purpose of this Guideline is to assist both AFAC and the Bushfire CRC in the development and implementation of professional development events. In order for these initiatives to be supported, it is important that:

- Events are seen as valuable opportunities to develop a shared understanding
- High quality resources are provided to support the adoption of new knowledge
- Agencies and participants have a clear understanding of the event's purpose
- Events are implemented consistently and are evaluated
- Events provide good value for money and a sound investment in knowledge transfer and creation.

Events will be tailored to the needs of the industry with potential topics being proposed by AFAC Groups, and through the Bushfire CRC's research adoption needs, as well as on other strategic issues identified by the industry.

AFAC Groups are encouraged to develop proposals for professional development events that support the implementation of AFAC's Strategic Plan and that are based on key knowledge issues identified by AFAC Groups. It is important that knowledge produced within agencies is accorded the same value as knowledge produced through



more traditional research practices, and that agencies are encouraged to promote this knowledge through their participation in professional development events.

Events will be held around the various States and Territories in Australia, and in New Zealand, to maximise opportunities for members to participate. In addition, a series of professional development events will be held preceding the annual AFAC/BCRC Conference.

These events are not intended to be formal education or training programs, however attendance may contribute to the attainment of a formal qualification. They are also not intended to replace normal AFAC Group meetings and/or Bushfire CRC business meetings. In particular, the Bushfire CRC may continue to run other events with its stakeholders, as appropriate.

This Guideline has been produced to assist with the planning of Professional Development Events.

## *Event Classification*

<b>Event Type</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Design</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Master Class</b>	Participants and the Master share challenges and explore solutions in an intimate setting.	Small group. Interactive and discussion based.	Senior Executives, Managers, specialists in subject area, and those recognised by their Agency as leaders in their field.	Maximum 15
<b>Seminar/ Lecture</b>	Imparts new knowledge and thinking. Awareness raising. Expert-led. Provides networking opportunities.	Lecture style format with single or multiple presentations on a related subject. Limited opportunity for discussion.	Broad audience. Attendance self-directed.	Approx 30 to 200
<b>Forum</b>	Imparts new knowledge and thinking. Awareness raising. Expert-led. Provides networking opportunities.	Lecture style format with single or multiple presentations on a related subject. Some opportunity for discussion eg. panel discussion.	Broad audience. Attendance self-directed.	Approx 30 to 50.
<b>Workshop</b>	Enhances development of a product or concept through collaboration. Significant educative value.	Highly interactive with brainstorming, syndicate or group work.	Participants will need to have expertise in subject area or related area.	Approx 20 to 30
<b>Clinic</b>	Practical skills acquisition. Application, adoption or utilisation of new knowledge.	Interactive with opportunities to practise in a "hands on" environment.	Some experience in subject area required.	Approx 20 to 30
<b>Knowledge Cafés</b>	Articulates the importance of conversation to share knowledge and gain a deeper understanding of a subject.	Larger group breaks into smaller discussion groups. No feedback sessions required.	Participants self-select based on mutual interest of subject.	Approx 20 - 50
<b>Conference</b>	Premier industry event. Presentations on issues of national and strategic significance. Networking opportunities.	Multiple presentations on related subjects across a number of streams.	Diverse audience from the EM sector and related research interests.	Approx 1000

# Event Types

## Master Classes

Master Classes are used to transfer knowledge from experts, or those who have “mastery” over the topic, to executives, senior managers and subject matter experts.

Classes are intellectually challenging and are led by someone who is an indisputable subject matter expert. The profile of the Master is one of the drawcards for this type of event, so those who are leaders in their field and well recognised for their mastery over the topic are used. It is also important that the Master’s knowledge can be contextualised in everyday work practices, so that the Master needs to be able to discuss how “lab” knowledge can elucidate problems experienced in the field.

Opportunities exist to create Master Classes that value both “expert” and “practitioner” knowledge to demonstrate how the two kinds of knowledge can co-exist and complement each other. (eg bringing together a master fire scientist with a senior field expert).

Master Classes should be seen by participants as prestigious, offering something “special” that cannot be achieved through other professional development approaches.

### **Event Purpose**

Master Classes provide an opportunity to acquire new knowledge and to gain an understanding about how to apply this within a given context. Participants are provided with opportunities to share challenges and explore solutions, in collaboration with the expert.

The Class allows participants the opportunity for thinking and reflection, and to acquire a new perspective on the subject through the acquisition of knowledge.

Master Classes are not designed to achieve a specific outcome or to make decisions or recommendations. The acquisition of knowledge is their primary purpose.

### **Event Design**

Master Classes will be interactive with participants provided with significant opportunity to discuss the subject and to test and explore new thinking with the Master and other participants. Careful consideration will be given to the design of the Master Class to provide maximum opportunities for interaction with the presenter and between participants.

Speakers from outside the industry will be engaged to expose participants to other perspectives and insights, however organisers will ensure that the content is relevant and can be applied within the emergency services context. Senior Bushfire CRC Researchers may fill the role of Master.

Classes will normally be held over one day. A session outline indicating what will be covered and timing of sessions will be provided to participants. Some preparation or pre-reading will be required, however a high level of pre-knowledge is assumed.

Elements of Master Classes may be recorded to allow the information and knowledge to be disseminated to a wider audience, via the Knowledge Web.

### **Participants**

Master Classes are primarily designed for senior personnel or for specialists in the subject area. Participants should be those people in agencies who have demonstrated the skills, enthusiasm and commitment in their particular area and will benefit from exposure to the Master Class environment. A certificate of attendance may be issued.

### **Numbers**

There will be a maximum of 15 participants to provide opportunities for discussion in a more intimate setting.

## Seminars and Lectures

Seminars and Lectures can range from single session lectures to one or two day events, and are devoted to presentations or discussion of a specialised topic. Ideas and approaches are usually shared with participants in order for them to gain understanding of the subject.

### Event Purpose

Seminars and lectures aim to impart new knowledge and thinking to participants. Presentations on new research findings, program evaluation or case studies are often the subject of these types of events.

An often unstated purpose is to bring together a range of people who have a similar interest in the subject to allow for informal networking opportunities, or "knowledge networking". It is often through these more informal exchanges that new knowledge and thinking is embedded across a sector.

### Event Design

Seminars and lectures use a similar format for the presentation of information, with the speakers presenting on a range of related themes or topics. A moderator may be used.

A structured Q and A session will usually be held at the conclusion, providing participants with some opportunity for interaction with the speakers, however this discussion will be limited.

These types of events are variable in length, depending on need.

Given the importance of networking at these events, sufficient time will be scheduled for breaks, which may also be used to showcase different products and services, such as through a mini-expo.

Presentation materials will be provided to participants and captured for broader dissemination through the Knowledge Web.

### Participants

Seminars and lectures appeal to a broad audience who have an interest in the subject area. Attendance will usually be self-directed. Participants will not always be expert in the subject area, and may range in skills and knowledge from practitioner level to senior managers.

### Numbers

Participant numbers may range from around 30 to 200.

## Forums

As with seminars, forums are devoted to presentations or discussion around a specialised topic.

### Event purpose

Forums aim to impart new knowledge and thinking to participants.

### Event design

Forums are similar in design to seminars, with a number of presentations on a range of related topics. However forums are usually more interactive and will often feature a panel discussion at the conclusion of the presentations, allowing for more discussion and audience participation.

### Participants

Forums appeal to a broad audience who have an interest in the subject area.

### Numbers

Participant numbers may range from 30 to 50.

## Workshops

A workshop is where a group of people come together to work collaboratively and creatively on a particular topic. Workshops are focussed on problem solving and testing concepts or prototypes to see if the methodology is sound when applied.

### **Event Purpose**

Workshops will be held on a specific topic or emerging issue that needs a pathway forward. The aim is the further exploration and development of an idea, product, concept or tool that will often be of benefit to workshop participants, once completed. The intent is that the product that is developed is better than would have otherwise been achieved without the input of the group.

Workshops are particularly suited to conducting impact assessments of Bushfire CRC Research and to inform subsequent product development. As such, participants may be key stakeholders or end users, and their input enhances their ownership and the credibility of the result.

### **Event Design**

Workshops will be highly interactive and will usually be held over one day, however they may be held over two days, or two half days, to provide flexibility for attendees. Workshops involve a range of facilitation techniques and a skilled facilitator may be engaged to work with the presenter to manage the process, and to achieve the desired outcomes.

A variety of perspectives are elicited through using group and syndicate work, and workshops will provide participants with opportunities for significant input.

Through active sharing and collaboration, workshops generate intellectual capital and participants gain new knowledge and understanding.

Participants will be recognised and acknowledged for their input.

Workshops require pre-event preparation and dissemination of materials as well as capture of new knowledge created at the event. This material should be captured in a meaningful way to create a knowledge legacy for lodgement and sharing via the Knowledge Web or via other methods such as journal articles.

### **Participants**

Participants should have expertise in the subject or related subjects to be able to make a valuable contribution. However there is also value in some of the participants being from outside the subject area, in order to provide new perspectives and insights to the workshop.

### **Numbers**

Participant numbers will be limited to approximately 20 to 30 to allow for maximum input.

## Clinics

A Clinic, sometimes referred to as a lab or tutorial, is a learning opportunity where an expert gives practical instruction and advice to a group. They provide opportunities for participants to learn and apply knowledge in a practical setting, which can then be transferred within their own work environment. This is probably one of the most important types of professional development opportunities for the fire and emergency services sector, given the way many people involved in the industry like to learn through practical application.

### Event Purpose

Clinics are “how to” events. They provide practical skills to participants, who gain insight and understanding as to how to go about using a particular tool or product through having an opportunity to practise the skill with the expert. They can be useful for embedding product knowledge, such as a new fire behaviour model, into agency practice.

### Event Design

Clinics will be used for a variety of subject areas. They may take the form of a field trip where participants are provided with opportunities for practical skills acquisition, or may be used to allow participants to practise using a new tool, methodology or reporting framework. The knowledge gained can then be applied within the participant’s workplace. A key focus for a Clinic is collaboration and sharing of knowledge.

In most instances Clinics will not be competency based with no formal qualification provided at the conclusion. Rather they provide an opportunity to acquire a new skill through practising in a “hands on” environment. Certificates of attendance may be issued.

Given the practical nature of the event, Clinics are suited to kinaesthetic learners who acquire knowledge through application.

### Participants

Participants need to have some experience in the subject, however do not need to be experts in their field.

### Numbers

Participant numbers will be approximately 20 to 30 to allow for maximum opportunities to practise.

## Knowledge Cafés

Knowledge Cafés are casual discussions where participants share ideas and insights in small groups in a fun and relaxed manner, often over a coffee or lunch break, hence the name. As such, they are ideally suited to being held during the work day.

### Event purpose

A Knowledge Café aims to provide an open and creative conversation on a topic of mutual interest to surface the collective knowledge of the group. Participants share ideas and insights, and gain a deeper understanding of the subject and the issues involved. One of the primary purposes of knowledge cafés is to articulate the important role of conversation in gaining a shared understanding.

### Event design

Knowledge Cafés begin with the facilitator posing a question to the group. The group then breaks into smaller groups of 5 to 8 participants to discuss the question before returning to the larger group. No summary of the discussion is captured for subsequent feedback to the large group. The only hard and fast rule is that the café is conducted in such a way that most of the time is spent in conversation.

### Participants

Participants can self-select for Knowledge Cafés on the basis of mutual interest in the subject. No particular expertise is required, just a willingness to engage in conversation about the subject.

### Numbers

A Knowledge Café is most effective with between 15 and 50 participants. Around 30 participants is an ideal number.

## AFAC/Bushfire CRC Annual Conference

The Annual AFAC/Bushfire CRC Conference is the premier knowledge event for the emergency services industry. It brings together a diverse audience with a range of interests from across the sector.

### Event Purpose

The Annual Conference provides an opportunity to raise and explore issues of strategic and national importance to the industry, to explore new research findings, to showcase the work of individual agencies, to gain an understanding of lessons learned, and is also the premier networking event.

### Event Design

The Conference provides a number of streams that focus on a range of related topics. Presentations have various formats including debates, however interaction and discussion between participants and speakers is generally limited to a Q and A session following each presentation.

To ensure the Conference is a high quality knowledge management event, the following will apply.

Presenters will need to:

- Be skilled in presenting information, or will be provided an opportunity to develop these skills prior to the conference
- Add value to their subject matter by presenting it in person
- Allow sufficient time for questions and interaction with participants following their presentation
- Submit papers/presentations a few weeks prior to the conference
- Align their presentation to the conference theme

Sessions will be complementary and properly themed in the program.

As the conference is also a networking event, sufficient time and space will be provided for delegates to network and meet others.

More formal opportunities to facilitate networking will be provided and presenters will be asked to make themselves available for small group discussions following their presentation. This may include an "On the Couch" session, where presenters are available at advertised times, and those interested in exploring the subject further will be able to sit down for an informal chat with the presenter.

### Trade Exhibition

An important aspect of the conference is the exhibition which provides delegates with an opportunity to view the latest products and services and to discuss the needs of their agencies with suppliers. More than 100 exhibitors have attended previous conferences, as it provides an opportunity for them to engage directly with their end users.

Future conferences may provide more formal opportunities for knowledge exchange and transfer between exhibitors and agency personnel, to inform the design of new products that meet industry needs.

### Poster Displays

Poster displays provide an opportunity for knowledge transfer, with researchers and AFAC Groups showcasing their research findings to delegates. The poster display will be given prominence within the conference format, with opportunities for interaction between poster authors and delegates provided.

### Professional Development Events

A program of professional development events will be conducted on the day preceding the conference to add value for members attending. The events program will include workshops, seminars and master classes covering a range of topics that participants may wish to explore in more detail.

### **Field Trips**

A program of field trips will be held following the conference. Field trips will provide a range of learning related outcomes and will include trips to view areas previously subjected to fire, to view research undertaken as part of the Bushfire CRC, or to look at programs conducted by local fire agencies.

### **Participants**

Agencies should consider their delegate mix, to maximise knowledge transfer opportunities from those attending the conference back into their organisation.

Agencies could consider asking delegates to provide a written report of their conference experience to assist in the adoption of new knowledge, as delegates are then required to reflect on what they have gained from the experience and share this with others.

## Other Considerations

### Venue

Venues will be selected based on the type of event being delivered. Where possible, venues will be close to public transport and/or provide adequate on-site parking. Consideration will also be given to ensure an accessible venue is chosen.

The Event Checklist provides more information in relation to venue selection/requirements.

### Resources

The knowledge management approach is strengthened by the provision of supporting resources, which may include copies of presentations or speaker notes, checklists, fact sheets, or other resources being provided to participants.

The aim is to provide further opportunities for participants to acquire and embed new knowledge and to be able to pass this thinking to others within their agency. These should be written in plain English, with minimal jargon and acronyms, to increase their accessibility and usefulness.

These materials should, at a minimum, be lodged on the Knowledge Web, where appropriate.

A number of products have been developed as part of the research adoption program for the Bushfire CRC, and these will be provided to participants, where appropriate.

### Publicity and Marketing

An annual program of Professional Development Events will be promoted via the AFAC Knowledge Web and on the Bushfire CRC website. In addition, agencies may also promote events through their own websites and other internal communications.

### Evaluation and Feedback

Each event will have an accompanying evaluation process. This may include an evaluation form provided to participants at the beginning of the

## Related Documents

session, a survey of participants, or independent observers.

The evaluation will be designed to elicit the type of information that can be used to inform future event design.

### Registrations and Payments

The use of an online registration and payment system is being researched to facilitate the management of these events.

### Costs

Some events will be free to participants while others will be delivered on a cost-recovery basis. Some will be designed to generate revenue that AFAC can use to further develop its range of services for members.

AFAC Thinking Requires Knowledge: An Approach to Knowledge Creation, February 2009

Bushfire CRC Research Adoption Strategy November 2008

Bushfire CRC Research Adoption Plan 2009-2010

Event Proposal Form

Event Checklist