

# Keys to Success for Chief Training Officers

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SURF LIFE SAVING  
**NEW SOUTH WALES**

### Surf Life Saving NSW Education Team

Throughout this booklet we refer to the Surf Life Saving NSW (SLSNSW) Education Team as a source of support. You'll get to know the different members of the staff team during your time as a Chief Training Officer (CTO), but if you don't yet have a contact you can get in touch at [education@surflifesaving.com.au](mailto:education@surflifesaving.com.au) or on (02) 9471 8000.

### Where to find resources...

Hard copies of the Education Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and the Quick Reference Guides referred to in this booklet can be requested from your Branch Director of Education or from the SLSNSW Education Team.

A soft copy of the SOPs can be found at [www.surflifesaving.com.au/members/member-training](http://www.surflifesaving.com.au/members/member-training). Soft copies of the Quick Reference Guides, forms and Awards & Qualification Chart can be found at [www.surflifesaving.com.au/members/member-training/training-resources](http://www.surflifesaving.com.au/members/member-training/training-resources).

## Key Contacts

**Branch Director of Education:** \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile number: \_\_\_\_\_

Best time to call: \_\_\_\_\_

**Club President:** \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile number: \_\_\_\_\_

Best time to call: \_\_\_\_\_

**Club Captain:** \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile number: \_\_\_\_\_

Best time to call: \_\_\_\_\_



## Introduction

If you are reading this, you are probably considering taking on (or have already taken on!) the role of Chief Training Officer (CTO) for your Club. We hope you agree that this role can be very rewarding! Without quality training and education, it would be very difficult for your Club to provide reliable and effective lifesaving services to the beach-going public. It can, however, be a bit overwhelming at first.

That's why we developed this booklet. It provides some suggestions of things to think about to help get you started in the role. As a volunteer, we know that you want to spend your time doing things that will make the biggest difference to your Club and your community. We also know that you want to spend your time doing the things that you enjoy! We hope that this booklet will help you to do that, and to help you shape the role into one that works for you.

## What will you get from this booklet?

Firstly, you should know what this booklet **won't** do. This booklet won't provide you with a list of rules and policies that you have to follow – that's what the Education Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are for. If you don't yet have a copy of the most up to date version of this, make it a priority to get your hands on a hard copy of one that you can read and then use as a reference tool. Supporting the SOPs are two Quick Reference Guides: one for Member Education Administration and one for Trainer, Assessor and Facilitator Endorsement & Re-endorsement. They provide you with a quick reference to the answers to common questions about where to find resources, what forms are needed, and how the Assessment Request process in SurfGuard links to course delivery and assessment. Your Branch might also have some policies or processes that you need to be aware of,

so be sure to find out about these too.

Secondly, this booklet won't necessarily provide you with the answers to all your questions or the magic bullet to fix whatever needs fixing. The CTO role is a management role, and if you have any previous experience of being a manager you'll know that effective management is all about problem solving. You'll need to make use of those around you and be adaptable and open-minded to understand and help solve the challenges in your Club.

So what **will** it do? Well, we hope this booklet will guide you through the early days of being a CTO. It will provide you with some suggestions and ideas about things that you might want to consider or do to help you understand your role better and decide what your focus will be during your

time as CTO. Look out for the yellow points at the end of each section, which serve as an easy-to-refer-to reminder of the key suggestions from each section.

→ Familiarise yourself with the Education SOPs (Academy Volunteer Handbook).

→ Find out about any Branch-specific policies or processes.

→ Make use of the SLSNSW Education Team as a source of support.



## What is the role?

The CTO role can be broken down into three main areas:

1. Ensuring members have access to training opportunities that meet the needs of the Club.
2. Ensuring that training is conducted in line with Surf Life Saving policies and procedures.
3. Managing the people in your Club Education Team to achieve the above.

Depending on your Club, you may also support junior education and/or community education in some way. This booklet, however, focuses solely on member education from age 13+. If you need support for the other areas in your role, speak to your Club President or contact the SLSNSW Education Team who will be able to point you in the right direction.

Be aware that although it might be the status quo, you don't need to continue delivering training or assessment to be a CTO. Your role is to manage the provision of training and education – not necessarily to deliver it as well! You only have a certain amount of time and energy, and taking on the role of a CTO might mean that you need to take a step back from some of the tasks you were previously doing. Don't feel guilty if this is the case. Just have a think about how the gaps that you leave behind can be filled by others.

## Training and education in Surf Life Saving

Surf Life Saving's training and education offers members the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills in aquatic rescue, powercraft operation, first aid and beach management. At a minimum, your Club will likely be responsible for the delivery of the following training:

- Surf Rescue Certificate
- Bronze Medallion
- Advanced Resuscitation Techniques
- IRB Crew / Driver

Depending on the size of your Club, you may also be responsible for the delivery of other training. If you haven't yet seen it, take a look at the Awards & Qualifications Chart on the SLSNSW website for the full range of awards on offer to members. Make sure you know which ones your Club is responsible for, and which ones the Branch will deliver.

Some Branches run central venue assessments, where assessment is organised by the Branch, whilst others leave this responsibility with the Clubs. Often the geography of the Branch (specifically how close Clubs are to one another) plays a key role in determining whether central venue assessments are practical.

As SLSNSW is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), our members gain nationally recognised qualifications for the training that they do with us. If you've read the Academy Volunteer Handbook (Education SOPs) you'll know that using up to date resources and forms, keeping accurate records and ensuring effective administration through SurfGuard are key elements of managing a compliant training provision. Make sure that you have the appropriate access to SurfGuard and the Members Portal and familiarise

yourself with how these systems work. Your Club President, Branch Director of Education or the SLSNSW Education Team can organise training for you in these systems if required.

→ Familiarise yourself with the SLSNSW Awards & Qualifications Chart.

→ Make sure you know which awards the Club is responsible for delivering.

→ Arrange access and any training for SurfGuard and the Members Portal.



## Be a connected CTO

One of the first things you may want to consider is speaking to key people in your Club and Branch to get a sense of what is currently working well and what may need to change. Remember that these will be their opinions only and you shouldn't promise anything just yet! You may find that different people have different opinions about what is working well, and you'll need to make your own judgements before deciding on any course of action.

You can use these initial meetings to introduce yourself to those you haven't worked with before and to provide some early thoughts about whatever is important to you. This could include setting some expectations about your availability, addressing any elephants in the room or simply outlining your plan for the first few weeks or months, which at this stage could well be "business as usual" whilst you get your head around

what's happening in the Club.

So, who should you speak to? We would suggest that the following groups and individuals are a good starting point.

- **Your Branch Director of Education:** This should be one of your first meetings – your Branch Director of Education is there to support you in your role.
- **Club President:** Find out more about the Club's Management Plan (if one exists) and about any expectations that the President has of you or the CTO role.
- **Trainers, Assessors and Facilitators in your Club:** This can be done as a group at a Club Education Meeting, or 1:1 if there are a small number of them in your Club.
- **Training Administrators:** Your Club may have someone who helps with the training paperwork or SurfGuard administration.

- **Club Captain:** Find out if the Club has enough trained members to meet its Lifesaving Service Agreement and about the effectiveness of training following assessment (on patrol).
- **Outgoing CTO:** This might not always be practical or appropriate, but the outgoing CTO may be a great source of information and support. Remember though that you don't have to do things exactly how the previous CTO did them.

You'll want to maintain relationships with the above groups and individuals during your time as a CTO. Often, meetings of the Club Executive, Club Education Team and Branch Education Team are in place to help you to do this. Make sure you know when these meetings are and try your best to make yourself available for them.

You should also think about how you will communicate with your Trainers and Assessors, as well as with the broader Club membership. Will you try to keep e-mail communications regular (i.e. once a month), or just communicate on an ad-hoc basis? How do you want members to find out about training courses on offer? E-mail is a useful tool, but make sure that whatever you send is useful and relevant. If it isn't, people will soon stop reading or even opening them!

→ Think about who you need to build relationships with, and how you will build them.

→ Find out when relevant Club and Branch meetings take place.



## Be a considered CTO

We mentioned at the start that we know that our CTOs want to spend their time doing things that will make the most difference to their Club. But how do you know what these things are?

As well as talking to people and seeking their opinions on what the current situation is, you should also make use of tools that can help you to better understand the Club's strengths and potential weaknesses in relation to education and training. There are two such tools that can help you to do this: Educheck and Club Sustainability Reports.

### **Educheck**

This tool aims to remind you of what you need to do to meet minimum RTO compliance requirements, and to help you to plan for greater sustainability of Education within your Club.

You can get your hands on the Educheck completed by the outgoing CTO either by asking them, or by contacting the SLSNSW Education Team.

It should have been completed in consultation with Trainers and Assessors in the Club, and should have some goals listed at the end.

You might decide to run through this at your first Club Education Meeting to check whether anything has changed and how progress is going towards the goals.

If you would like a blank copy of the tool to start afresh, just ask the SLSNSW Education Team.

### **Club Sustainability Report**

In comparison to Educheck, which is a very subjective tool (self-assessment based on your opinion), the Club

Sustainability Report is highly objective as it is based on data alone.

It provides you with key sustainability indicators such as what percentage of your Trainers and Assessors are active in their roles, and how many Bronze Trainers you have vs. new members. Your Club indicators will be compared to a state average so that you can see how well your Club is tracking in comparison to the rest of the state.

You might find that the information in the Club Sustainability Report supports the outcomes of Educheck, or you might find that it highlights some different issues.

You can get your hands on your Club Sustainability Report by asking either your Club President, or the SLSNSW Education Team.

## Goals and action plans

Once you've got a good handle of what is working well and where improvements are needed, you can set about working with those around you to determine if the current goals in place are the right ones, or whether there are more important things that you need to tackle earlier. Remember that you should work with others in your Club on this so that there is a shared vision and commitment to the way forward.

You may be able to identify one or two weaknesses that could be **quickly and easily** fixed. Achieving some initial "quick wins" can have several benefits: you feel you are achieving and your credibility as someone who does something good starts to be established.

When looking at your action plan, prioritise one or two things and aim to achieve those first. Trying to carry out

too many actions at once only leads to disappointment. Remember that change takes time and requires support from those around you. Those people are volunteers too, so try not to overload them either.

If you need any support with prioritising goals and developing some actions towards achieving them, speak to your Club president, Branch Director of Education or the SLSNSW Education Team. If required, the SLSNSW Education Team are happy to come and work with your Club to discuss the outcomes of the above tools and help you to prioritise issues, brainstorm solutions and agree actions to move things forward.

→ **Get your hands on the most recent Educheck and Club Sustainability Report.**

→ **Work with those around you to agree on goals and actions to move forward.**

→ **Identify some "quick wins" and achieve them as soon as you can.**



## Be a consistent CTO

One of the most draining parts of the CTO role is probably dealing with conflict, complaints and personality clashes. It's a reality that some Clubs experience these issues more than others. Our biggest piece of advice to you to manage these issues if and when they arise is to be consistent!

The majority of issues that arise in Surf Life Saving are because someone feels that they are being unfairly treated, that someone else is being given special treatment, or that someone else isn't playing by the rules. Sometimes people are concerned about the detriment this is causing to the Club or the reputation of Surf Life Saving, but sometimes people speak out because of a fundamental human desire to be treated fairly.

When issues arise, your first port of all should always be policy. Find out what the Surf Life Saving NSW or Branch

policy relating to the matter is, using the Academy Volunteer Handbook (Education SOPs) as a reference tool. Clarify the policy to those concerned in a supportive way, giving them the benefit of the doubt that when they know what is expected, they will adjust their behaviour accordingly.

If they don't and someone wants to make a formal complaint in writing, the complaints process is outlined in the Academy Volunteer Handbook (Education SOPs) to help you work through the issue.

Be sure to speak to your Club President, Branch Director of Education or the SLSNSW Education Team if you are unsure of what action you should take. It is best practice to make sure that your Club President and Branch Director of Education are across any education and training issues that are taking place in the Club.

**→ Consistently apply policies and procedures to avoid feelings of unfairness.**

**→ Follow the complaints process to deal with any issues in a fair and consistent manner.**



## Tips for success

Each Surf Life Saving Club will inevitably be different: different personalities, different sizes, different geographies and different demographics will create different strengths and different challenges. As such, it is unlikely that any two CTO roles will look exactly the same. There are, however, a few key things that we think help to make the CTO role more enjoyable and more effective, regardless of the Club. These are our tips for success:

**Just because it is your responsibility, it doesn't mean you have to do it yourself.**

Take a look at the CTO role description found in the back of the Academy Volunteer Handbook (Education SOPs). Add to this any additional things that you know need to be done locally. Then go down the list and identify those that you might not have to do (or might not

want to do) personally. Consider who you could ask to could do each of these things.

You may just want to delegate one or two tasks out, or you may want to consider sharing the CTO role amongst one or two people. A number of Clubs have successfully developed role shares by appointing Deputy or Assistant CTOs. The most common task that is delegated to an Assistant is the administration. Depending on the size of your Club, you may also want to delegate the responsibility for looking after your Trainers, Assessors and Facilitators, leaving you responsible for the overall management and ongoing development of training and education.

If you're interested to find out more about this, speak to the SLSNSW Education Team who can give you some examples or put you in touch with

Branches or Clubs across the state where the CTO has implemented a similar model in the past.

Remember that delegation is not about getting rid of tasks. Ultimately, you are still responsible for ensuring that they are done. You are delegating carrying out the task to another person who remains accountable to you for doing it. Before asking them if they'd like to help out, consider:

- Are there any boundaries you feel need to be placed on their responsibility or authority?
- What support will you be able to provide to help them get up and running?
- How will you review progress with them and provide ongoing support?

**→ Structure the CTO role and Education Team in a way that suits your skills, interests and availability.**

**You won't always have the resources you need. Don't let this stop you from achieving your goals.**

As you'll know, each Surf Life Saving Club is its own entity and its members often have a strong affiliation with that Club. This doesn't mean, however, that you need to struggle through on your own. Yes, in an ideal world each Club would have all the equipment and people needed to be self-sufficient in the training and assessment of Surf Rescue Certificate, Bronze Medallion, Advanced

Resuscitation Techniques and IRB Crew / Driver. But the reality is that this isn't always the case.

If you don't have sufficient well-maintained equipment in your Club, start by speaking to the Club Executive about whether there is any budget to replace or repair equipment. You may be able to make use of grants or fundraising efforts to solve the problem. If not, look wider than your Club. Perhaps there's another Club who can lend you equipment or run joint courses with you whilst you come up with a solution.

If you don't have enough Trainers or Assessors, it might be worth considering working with one or more Clubs to deliver training and/or assessment in certain awards whilst you are working towards building capacity.

If you weren't already aware, Surf Life Saving NSW provides information on available grants and grant-writing services on its website. These grants are often focused on better enabling Surf Life Saving to achieve its purpose on

the beach. Remember that training and education equipment is just as important as lifesaving equipment in enabling your Club to meet its Lifesaving Service Agreements.

Branch Education Meetings are a great way to maintain relationships with other CTOs. Try to make an effort to attend so that you can find out what others are doing, and how they are moving forwards and solving their problems.

→ **Be aware of grants and of the support that your Club Executive and other Clubs could offer you.**

**Remember that those around you are volunteers too. Value their time and their efforts.**

As CTO, an important part of your role is to make all the volunteers you support and manage feel valued. One of the greatest tools you have are the words 'thank you'. Whenever you are at a meeting or when someone does you a favour, never forget to thank people for all that they have done. If someone has had a success or has done something out of the ordinary, a phone call to say thanks can count for a lot.

You can also value people by respecting their time. CTOs are required to run at least two Club Education Meetings a year – often these will consist of a pre-season and a post-season meeting. As we all know, meetings are another ask on people's time. As volunteers, it is important to make the best use of people's personal time at meetings. To do this:

- Write down your agenda for the meeting, being clear about what you

want to achieve in the time available.

- Make sure the right people are invited to enable you achieve what you want. You might need to provide plenty of warning to make sure the right people are available.
- Consider the convenience of the location of the meeting or whether it can be carried out remotely using video or telephone conferencing.
- Set the length of the meeting and make sure you stick to it.
- Chair the meeting effectively, keeping to the agenda and keeping things moving.
- Ensure that those attending have a chance to put forward their views on relevant items.
- Delegate someone to take notes and summarise key decisions or actions at the end of the meeting.
- Circulate the notes as soon as possible after the meeting, remembering to send a copy to your Branch Director of Education.

→ **Thank people for what they do as a Trainer, Assessor or Administrator in the Education Team.**

→ **Prepare for meetings and chair them effectively to make the best use of your teams' time.**



**People's lives change. Always be on the look out for opportunities to grow and develop your team.**

Having the right people in the right role is hugely important. People sometimes need a change to re-energise them or a break from Surf Life Saving altogether. This does not mean they are not valuable to you or to Surf Life Saving. Have you thought about asking them if there is something else they would like to do that could increase their interest and motivation? Or if they do need a break, perhaps they would be happy for you to contact them in a year or so to see whether they would like to get back involved?

It pays to talk to people regularly to understand how they feel. At least once a season, it is a good idea to make some time to have an informal chat with the members of your team (either face to face or over the phone) to discuss how things are going and explore their views about the future. Perhaps they're keen to learn more or

take on some additional responsibilities – you never know until you ask!

It is reality that we never have enough Trainers and Assessors or they are concentrated only in certain awards. Consider how you will identify new Trainers and Assessors, remembering that recruitment should be everyone's responsibility. Trainers are in a great position to spot new talent on training courses – the people who seem to love learning and are naturals at helping those around them learn.

Think about how you can increase the efficiency of roles through initiatives like central venue assessments, or how you can make roles more enjoyable by having more people doing less by working as a team to deliver training.

Think too about who the next CTO could be when you decide to step down. Speak to them about the potential you see in them and if they sound interested, consider how you can expose them more to the role and help develop their skills, knowledge and

attitude to prepare them for the potential challenge ahead. This is succession planning, and is an important part of ensuring the stability and sustainability of Surf Life Saving Clubs.

→ **Understand how people are finding their roles and be flexible with those who want to step back.**

→ **Make the recruitment of new Trainers and Assessors everyone's responsibility.**

→ **Think about who the next CTO could be and what you can do to prepare them.**



**Above all, try to maintain a focus on quality, consistent and needs-based training and assessment.**

It's quite simple really. The number of courses in each award you run should be determined either by the number of members needing the training, or by the gaps in the current capability of your Club. Often we fall into the trap of just delivering the same number of courses that we delivered last season, forgetting that the Education Calendar should be a tool to help your Club meet its Lifesaving Service Agreement.

Once you're sure that you're providing training that meets the needs of the Club, you'll need to consider whether it is of high quality and consistent. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are all your Trainers and Assessors currently endorsed?
- How do you know that they are delivering high quality and consistent training and assessment?
- What do you do with Participant Evaluation Forms and Training Course

Reports – does anyone review them?

- Do you provide opportunities for Trainers to observe training in other awards or at different Clubs to provide them with new ideas for delivery methods and techniques?
- Do you provide opportunities for Assessors to work with one another to compare standards and approaches?
- Are Trainers and Assessors provided with constructive feedback on their performance by a respected, valued and objective person?

Remember that Trainers and Assessors who ask too much of learners can be just as much of a problem as those who accept too low a standard. Learners will become demotivated if they are continually expected to do extra unnecessary things. Remember that training and assessment should follow the Delivery & Assessment Guides for each course, available on the Members Portal. If you or your Trainers or Assessors are ever unsure of the standard required, speak to your Branch Director of Education or to the SLSNSW Education

Team. Often if it isn't clear to one Club, it will be unclear to others too.

The Trainer, Assessor and Facilitator (TAF) re-endorsement process is in place to help Trainers and Assessors to stay up to date with changes to content and to standards of assessment. You'll receive information about this process each year from Surf Life Saving NSW. Remind Trainers and Assessors of the benefits of this process and encourage them to attend your Branch-run pre-season meeting each year.

**→ Use your Education Calendar as a tool to ensure your Club meets its Lifesaving Service Agreement.**

**→ Ask yourself “How do I know that quality and consistent training and assessment is happening?”**



## Finally

Like any role in Surf Life Saving, there will always be something else to do. Remember that your first priority should always be yourself, your family and your friends. Surf Life Saving is a hobby and not a job! Learn to say no and to manage other people's expectations, remembering that their priorities are not necessarily yours.

We hope that you will enjoy your time as a CTO and are able to make a real difference to the quality of services that your Club provides for the community.

Remember that you are not alone, and that your Club President, Branch Director of Education and SLSNSW Education Team are all here to support you if you need it.

Good luck!



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