



TESL ONTARIO CHAPTER OPERATIONS GUIDE

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1 GENERAL OPERATIONS

1.1 GENERAL AIMS & OBJECTIVES

TESL Ontario Chapters are local units of the TESL Association of Ontario (hereafter referred to as “TESL Ontario” or “Association”) that operate under the Association’s governance to provide professional development and networking opportunities for members in their specific geographic areas. As defined, Chapters are formally connected to the parent association, with TESL Ontario retaining oversight to ensure alignment with its strategic goals. While Chapters may have their own executives, they are ultimately accountable to TESL Ontario.

TESL Ontario and its 12 Chapters share a common vision and priorities, working collaboratively to address the regional needs of members and enhance the overall member experience.

TESL Ontario Chapters currently in place are:

- TESL Durham
- TESL Hamilton-Wentworth
- TESL Kingston
- TESL London
- TESL Niagara
- TESL North York/York Region
- TESL Northern Region
- TESL Ottawa
- TESL Peel-Halton-Etobicoke
- TESL Toronto
- TESL Waterloo-Wellington
- TESL Windsor

20 or more members in good standing residing or working in the same geographical area of Ontario can form a Chapter.

For further information about how to form a Chapter, contact the TESL Ontario head office.

1.2 OPERATIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY (NEW – ADDED JANUARY 2025)

TESL Ontario’s goal is to support healthy, active chapters and assist those that face challenges, ensuring they remain a valuable resource for TESL Ontario members. This approach is designed to provide flexibility and adaptability for Chapter operational success.

1.2.1 Active and Sustainable Chapters

Healthy and active Chapters will continue to operate under the standard Chapter operating framework. Chapters will receive a 15% rebate for their membership to enable the independent production and coordination of local professional development (PD) and networking opportunities.

1.2.2 Chapters Support Options

Struggling Chapters have access to the following support options:

Recruitment Support:

Chapters can request TESL Ontario's assistance with volunteer recruitment including recruitment campaigns via email, social media, and other chapter-specific strategies.

Operational Support:

Chapters can request TESL Ontario's temporary operational support, including financial planning, event planning, and membership communications.

- Each region will maintain at least one volunteer "representative" who will:
 - Attend an annual joint meeting to relay community challenges.
 - Assist TESL Ontario in making local connections, selecting venues, and promoting events.
- Chapter funds will cover event planning and support costs.

1.2.3 Dissolution of a Chapter

As a last resort, when all other support options have been exhausted, a Chapter may choose to close its operations. This is a permanent decision and should be used only as a last resort.

Process for Chapter Dissolution

1. Notification:

- Schedule meeting with TESL Ontario to provide notification of the decision to disband and provide reasons for decision.
- TESL Ontario to review details of the request to ensure that dissolution is the only viable option.

2. Membership Input:

- Conduct a vote / poll among the membership to gather feedback on the decision.

3. Board Decision:

- TESL Ontario's board will vote on the dissolution of the Chapter.

4. Reassignment:

- Members of the disbanded chapter will be absorbed by nearby chapters.

5. Administrative Updates:

- TESL Ontario will update the Chapter map, operational guides, and other member information to reflect the changes.

1.2.4 TESL Ontario Intervention in Extreme Cases

In extreme cases where a Chapter's operations are no longer functional and there are no active, engaged volunteers for TESL Ontario to collaborate with, TESL Ontario will step in to assume temporary control of the Chapter. This intervention will ensure the continuity of professional development and networking opportunities for local members.

During this period, TESL Ontario will manage Chapter activities, finances, and member communications while working to resolve the underlying issues. TESL Ontario will prioritize the recruitment and establishment of a new volunteer executive to restore independent Chapter operations. The goal of this intervention is to stabilize the Chapter and return governance to a local volunteer executive as soon as feasible.

1.3 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The TESL Ontario Board of Directors produces a 3-year Strategic Priorities document for the association. It is the responsibility of each TESL Ontario Chapter to help the association work towards these goals.

1.4 CHAPTER ELECTION PROCEDURES

Chapter Executive members are elected by their respective membership. Each Chapter Executive is required to form a Nominations Committee that will seek and vet Chapter Executive applications. An Expression of Interest template as well as a Candidate Assessment Matrix is available from TESL Ontario that may be adapted by a Chapter in order to identify the candidates most qualified to serve the specific needs of the Chapter. Once the candidates have been identified and have been approved by each Chapter Executive, they will be presented to the Chapter membership for election or acclamation at their annual Chapter meeting.

The number of members on a Chapter Executive is flexible, depending on size of Chapter. A minimum of five and a maximum of 15 is suggested. TESL Ontario requires that all members of a Chapter Executive be voted in by the local membership as “Members-at-Large”. The recommended term of service is three years, with the possibility of re-election for an additional three years. In order to serve the second three-year term, candidates must be re-elected by the local membership. We understand that finding and retaining volunteers can be difficult, as such it is possible for an executive to continue in their role beyond a second term, provided they have the support of the Chapter executive and local membership.

A Chapter Executive as a whole are required, at their first meeting after their annual meeting election, to choose at least four Officers who will serve as Chapter President, Chapter Representative, Chapter Treasurer and Chapter Membership Secretary. Position Descriptions for the four positions are provided under section 1.4.1. In addition to these four core positions, the Chapter Executive may choose other positions to serve on the Executive, such as Webmaster, Newsletter Editor, Communications Officer, etc., based on their specific needs. The four core officer positions are required to be chosen every year, but the same person may be chosen throughout his/her term for a specific core position in order to provide continuity.

1.4.1 Position Descriptions

CHAPTER PRESIDENT

The Chapter Presidents as leaders of the Chapters:

1. connect with other Chapter Presidents to build a community of leadership expertise and to support each other in leading the Chapters,
2. assure the integrity of the Chapter process,
3. meet with the TESL Ontario Board and Chapter Representatives once per year to discuss broad leadership issues, (i.e. recruitment, recognition of volunteers, structure of the organization) and to contribute to the board’s awareness of issues affecting members,
4. ensure knowledge of TESL Ontario activities and initiatives through receipt of frequent reports (approximately 6 per year) from TESL Ontario Executive Director, and
5. are empowered to chair Chapter Executive Meetings with all the commonly accepted power of that position (e.g. ruling, recognizing).

CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVE

The roles of the Chapter Representatives Group are as follows:

1. **Networking:** To learn from each other to better serve their local membership. The Chapter Representative (ACR) group will meet twice annually to network and learn from the experiences of other ACRs.

2. **Membership Linkage:** To represent members with TESL Ontario. Meet with the TESL Ontario Board and Chapter Representatives once per year to discuss broad leadership issues, (i.e. recruitment, recognition of volunteers, structure of the organization) and to contribute to the board's awareness of issues affecting members, and
3. **Member Information and Education:** To educate and assist their own local members regarding TESL Ontario including:
 - a) the benefits of TESL Ontario membership,
 - b) where and how to get answers to questions that the ACRs cannot provide themselves, and
 - c) information relevant to Chapters and the members.
4. **Ambassadors of TESL Ontario:** To support TESL Ontario initiatives and help to support the organization's image.
5. **Information Dissemination:** Receives frequent reports (approximately 6 per year) from TESL Ontario Executive Director and share them as appropriate with members of the Chapter Executive.

CHAPTER TREASURER

The roles of the Chapter Treasurers Group are as follows:

1. General financial oversight of Chapter's operation

- supervises and oversees all financial transactions of the Chapter,
- liaises with Chapter Executive members about financial matters,
- assures Chapter Operating Disbursement (rebate) is spent on professional development, and
- monitors the Chapter's budget.

2. Financial planning and budgeting

- prepares annual budgets,
- prepares conference or event budget, and
- presents budgets to the Chapter Executive.

3. Banking, record-keeping

- liaises with the bank and maintains the Chapter's bank account,
- deposits all incoming cash and cheques to the bank account in a timely manner,
- makes all payments by cheques or e-transfer (upon recommendation from the Auditors, the Association does not use cash transactions),
- ensures that all cheques are signed by two authorized persons, unless e-transfer is activated on the account, in which case one signature is permitted,
- supports all payments with invoices and receipts, and
- keeps all financial documents on file.

4. Financial reporting

- prepares and submits a financial report with bank statement and relevant invoices/receipts to TESL Ontario on a monthly basis,
- prepares and presents financial reports for executive meetings, and
- prepares financial reports for the Chapter's Annual Meeting.

5. Financial auditing

- submits all required documents in the event of an audit, and
- liaises with the TESL Ontario auditor during the audit.

CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

The roles of the Chapter Membership Secretaries Group are as follows:

1. Membership management

- liaises with Member Services Coordinator at TESL Ontario,
- promotes TESL Ontario membership to non-members at Chapter events and within the Chapter community,
- receives an updated Chapter membership contact list each month,
- responsible for distributing a copy of the Chapter membership list to other Chapter Executive members as necessary,
- responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the Chapter membership list,

- verifies Chapter membership for the purposes of PD event registration as required,
- may contact lapsed Chapter members to encourage them to reconsider renewing their membership,
- contacts new Chapter members to welcome them to the Chapter and provides the new member with membership information about the Chapter, including professional development offerings, Chapter communications (i.e. emails, website address, social media options, and contact information for the Chapter President), and
- responds to member inquiries about renewal of membership, membership benefits and new membership options, referring members to the TESL Ontario Member Services Coordinator when/as appropriate.

2. Membership Reporting

- receives monthly membership reports from TESL Ontario Member Services Coordinator, and reports membership statistics to Chapter Executive including membership total, new members and lapsed members, and
- receives membership contact list on a monthly basis from TESL Ontario Member Services Coordinator.

1.5 CHAPTER EXECUTIVE MEETINGS

Chapter Executives for each individual Chapter are required to meet on a regular basis to conduct the affairs of their Chapter. Each Chapter should aim to hold an Annual Meeting with their local membership.

1.5.1 Core Officer Meeting Requirements

- Chapter Representatives or designated replacement from all Chapters will meet twice annually. Once as group, and once at a joint meeting with the TESL Ontario Board of Directors,
- Chapter Presidents or designated replacement from all Chapters will meet twice annually. Once as a group with Chapter Representatives, and once at a joint meeting with the TESL Ontario Board of Directors,
- Chapter Membership Secretaries or designated replacements may meet once annually with the TESL Ontario Member Services Coordinator in an online format, and
- Chapter Treasurers or designated replacements may meet once annually with the TESL Ontario Operations Manager in an online format.

1.5.2 Travel and Accommodation

Chapter Executives are entitled to be reimbursed **by their Chapter** for their travel expense for attending Core Officer meetings. Mileage is reimbursed at 55 cents/km. There is no gas cost reimbursement in addition to the mileage indicated.

For those Chapter Executives who live 50 km or further from the location of the meeting, accommodation will be available, if necessary, for the night before the meeting, which will also be reimbursed by the Chapter.

There is no reimbursement for meals.

Chapter Executive Members' Code of Conduct

All Chapter Executives commit themselves to ethical, businesslike and lawful conduct in running the affairs of the Chapters.

1. Chapter Executives must have loyalty not only to their individual Chapter but also to TESL Ontario and its membership, and not in conflict with loyalties to individuals, other organizations, or any personal interest as a member.
2. Chapter Executives must avoid conflict of interest or perception of conflict of interest with respect to their fiduciary responsibility. Please refer to the Conflict of Interest Guidelines in section 1.5.3.
3. Chapter Executives may not attempt to exercise individual authority over the Chapter.
4. Chapter Executives will respect the confidentiality appropriate to issues of a sensitive nature.
5. Chapter Executives will be properly prepared for Chapter Executive meeting deliberations.
6. Chapter Executives will support the legitimacy and authority of the final determination of the Chapter Executive on any matter, irrespective of their own personal position on the issue.
 - (i) In the event of intermittent absenteeism in a Chapter Executive's first three-year term where the Chapter Executive has less than 75% attendance, this could be a factor in the review process if the person applies to run for a second term.
 - (ii) If less than 75% attendance occurs in the second term, the Chapter Executive President would discuss it with the Chapter Executive to ensure that attendance expectations are clear. This would also aid in identifying any extenuating circumstances or other issues that could be resolved one-on-one.

- (iii) Two consecutive absences would not be treated as automatic resignation. The Chapter President would discuss with the Executive member back-to-back absences that might be explained by illness or family considerations.
- (iv) If a Chapter Executive member is unable to commit to improving attendance but chooses to remain on the Chapter Executive, the Chapter President, after consultation with the full Chapter Executive, has the right to ask the Executive member to resign.

1.5.3 Conflict of Interest Policy

TESL Ontario commits itself and its members to ethical, businesslike and lawful conduct, including proper use of authority and appropriate decorum when acting as Chapter Executive members.

Whenever a Chapter Executive member has a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest with the association or with any subject matter that may be discussed at any given board meeting, this conflict needs to be brought to the attention of the entire Chapter Executive.

After identifying the issue, matter or transaction with respect to which a conflict exists, the Executive member shall withdraw from any further involvement in that issue, matter or transaction, unless a majority of the Chapter Executive members determine that the conflict is:

- immaterial or not averse to the interests of the Association, or
- that the benefits of allowing the person with the conflict to participate in the discussion or consideration, but not the final decision, outweigh the dangers; in which case the person may participate in the study or consideration of the issue, but not the final discussion, decision or vote.

Each Chapter Executive meeting agenda will make mention of Declaration of Conflict of Interest so the issue can be declared up front. The minutes of the meeting at which the disclosure of any conflict is made shall reflect that the disclosure was made and whether the person with the conflict withdrew after making full disclosure of the matter in question and the conflict, and was therefore not present for the final discussion of the matter and any vote thereon.

A conflict of interest exists when:

- any Chapter Executive member, close relative, or employer of the Executive member, has an interest in an issue, matter or transaction in which the Association has an interest, or
- any Chapter Executive member or close relative acts as an agent, representative or spokesperson for any person, business, group or organization, in order to influence the Association on any issue, matter or transaction.

An individual or an organization is deemed to have a conflict of interest if the individual (1) is an agent for a person or organization with an identified goal of influencing a decision made by the Chapter Executive, or (2) would experience a material economic gain or loss from a decision made by the Chapter Executive.

A "close relative" is defined as a spouse, a child, natural or adoptive parent, grandparent, grandchild or sibling. The term also includes any other family member who resides in the same household or shares living quarters with a Chapter Executive member under circumstances that closely resemble a marital or partner relationship.

When a Chapter Executive member finds himself or herself in a conflict of interest in any position with another organization, the TESL Ontario representative shall immediately notify the Chapter Executive, and the Executive may appoint an alternative Chapter member to represent the interests of the Chapter in the proceedings.

In addition to the foregoing, Chapter members should not:

- use inside information (i.e. information made available to them because of their position as an Executive member which is proprietary or confidential or otherwise not generally known to the public) for their personal advantage or that of any close relative, or
- accept any service, discount, concession, fee for advice or service, or thing of value from any person or organization with an interest in an issue, matter or transaction in which the Chapter also has an economic interest under circumstances that would suggest an obligation on the part of the Chapter member to exert any influence on the Chapter Executive to enter into a transaction or adopt, alter or abolish any policy on a position.

1.6 CODE OF ETHICS

A code of ethics establishes the ethical principles governing professional conduct. It reflects the social mores of the time, and the values and moral principles upheld as a collective.

An association's code of ethics fosters a culture that inspires its members to uphold the integrity of their profession, recognize their ethical responsibilities, guide professional decisions, and promote public trust. The Code of Ethics for TESL Ontario Members encapsulates the core values that ground their professional practice. These values are respect, integrity, compassion, trust, and commitment to excellence.

The TESL Ontario Code of Ethics can be found on the TESL Ontario website under the "Our Organization" section.

2 FINANCIAL

2.1 CHAPTER OPERATING DISBURSEMENT (REBATES)

The Chapter Operating Disbursement is paid by TESL Ontario to all Chapters in the second quarter in each calendar year.

The following Board decision is in effect with regard to Chapter Operating Disbursement:

- Chapter Operating Disbursements are currently calculated as 15% of the TESL Ontario net membership fee. The calculation is the same for the Student/Volunteer/Friends of TESL category.

A membership list for each Chapter, used for the calculation of the operating disbursement, is e-mailed to the Chapter Treasurer. The payment of the operating disbursement is deposited to the Chapter's bank account through EFT (electronic fund transfer).

Chapter Operating Disbursement funds must be spent on professional development events or related activities (e.g. covering registration fee and travel cost for the Chapter presidents, representatives, membership secretaries and treasurers to attend the TESL Ontario conference, covering registration fee and travel cost (if necessary) to attend other Chapter conferences, setting up bursaries.)

2.2 CHAPTER TREASURER REPORTS

Chapter Treasurers are required to submit monthly financial reports to TESL Ontario during the fiscal year. The report for each month must be submitted by the last day of the following month by electronic or hard copies. A report template is provided. A reminder email to the Treasurers will be sent by the 20th of each month.

The monthly financial report must include the completed report template in excel format, the bank statement and the invoices/receipts for all expenses paid during the month. Electronic submission of the report to operations@teslontario.org is preferred.

Chapter Treasurers are required to submit the names, phone numbers, and email addresses of all executives with signing authority on the Chapter bank account. The appropriate form will be provided by the TESL Ontario Operations Manager.

Orientation and ongoing advice to Chapter Treasurers is offered by the TESL Ontario Operations Manager through email, phone or in person.

2.3 CHAPTER AUDITS

TESL Ontario's Auditor may select two Chapters for audit at the end of the fiscal year.

The Chapter Treasurer is required to be available to answer any auditor questions during the audit.

2.4 FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Chapter Treasurers are responsible to oversee all financial activities of their Chapter and assure that the Chapter is in good shape financially. TESL Ontario expects Chapters not to run a deficit.

2.4.1 Contracts

In the case of contract amounts exceeding 25% of the Chapter's Operating Disbursement amount, the Chapter must notify the TESL Ontario Head Office before signing the contract.

2.4.2 Financial Planning (New - added January 2025)

- Surplus funds can be invested in short-term GICs to earn interest for the Chapter, to maintain the value of the Chapter funds.
- Ensure that banking access information is passed along to succeeding treasurers.

2.4.3 Event Planning

Free Member Events

Each Chapter may host a maximum of two free events for its membership annually. The combined cost of the free events **must not exceed 25% of the Chapter's annual rebate**. The financials for the remaining events should be supported by registration fees.

Events Supported by Registration Fees:

Events with registration fees - the **registration fees should cover at minimum 60% of the event expenses**. An event budget should be created including:

- Create an expected revenue budget based on estimated previous event attendance numbers.
- Determine event ticket prices based on affordability for your audience, and size and scope of event.
- Create an expected expenditure budget by doing your best to choose cost effective options to tailor expenses to match the expected ticket price revenue

2.5 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (NEW – ADDED JANUARY 2025)

Financial management is a critical component of ensuring the success and sustainability of Chapters. The following guidelines for allowable spending are designed to provide flexibility, enabling Chapters to better support their member and volunteer communities while planning for long-term financial stability.

2.5.1 Eligible Expenses

Chapter funds may be used for the following expenditures:

Supporting Volunteers:

- Annual draws to cover 2-3 free memberships for members of your volunteer team.
- Sending volunteers to conferences (Chapter or TESL Ontario).
- Covering travel costs for in-person meetings and conference attendance.
- Recognizing volunteers during National Volunteer Week (e.g., gift card raffles, gift baskets, appreciation events).

Supporting Members:

- Draws for free membership renewals, conference passes, or door prizes e.g. gift cards.
- Offering discounts or free new student memberships to attract new members.
- Raffles for event registrations (Chapter or TESL Ontario conference).
- Subsidizing your Chapter event ticket costs to make them more affordable.
- Providing member bursaries for attending conferences.

Supporting Chapter Operations (New Added March 2026):

- Website hosting and domain registration
- Virtual meeting platforms (e.g., Zoom, Teams, webinar tools)
- Banking and transaction fees
- Payment processing fees (e.g., Eventbrite, PayPal)
- Promotional and communications materials for Chapter activities (digital or print)
- Modest administrative and operational supplies (e.g., printing, postage, office supplies)

- Modest and reasonable expenses to support in-person Chapter executive meetings (e.g., administrative costs, light refreshments etc.)
- Reasonable speaker honoraria for Chapter events (generally not exceeding \$350 per speaker)

NOTE: Event expenses should be calculated in accordance with the policies outlined in Section 2.4.3 “Event Planning”.

2.5.2 Ineligible Expenses (New Added March 2026)

Chapter funds must not be used for personal benefit, unrelated purposes, or activities that do not directly support Chapter members or operations including:

Personal Benefit & Compensation

- Honoraria, salaries, or stipends for Chapter executives or volunteers
- Personal gifts beyond modest volunteer recognition (e.g., high-value items or cash equivalents outside approved draws)
- Personal travel not directly tied to approved Chapter business

Expenses Not Aligned with Chapter Activities

- Donations or contributions to charities, organizations, individuals, or political entities
- Sponsorships not directly tied to Chapter or member benefit
- Alcohol purchases
- Entertainment expenses without a clear member-serving purpose
- Expenses not aligned with the Chapter mandate or member services
- Luxury or excessive items (e.g., high-end venues, premium gifts)

Financial Control & Compliance Risks

- Cash withdrawals without appropriate documentation and approval
- Unreceipted or undocumented expenses

NOTE: Event Liability Insurance is provided by TESL Ontario head office.

3 MEMBERSHIP

3.1 CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP REPORTS

Chapter Membership reports are sent to the Chapter Membership Secretary on a monthly basis by the Membership Services Coordinator. These reports are to be used by the Chapter Executive to communicate with its members, as well as to monitor the membership for trends to help develop future plans for the Chapter.

The monthly reports include the following:

- **Active Membership List** – list of all active Chapter members
- **Non-Renewal Report** – list of recently lapsed Chapter members
- **New Member Report** – list of all new Chapter members joined in the previous month

Other Optional Reports Include:

- **Teaching Sector Report** – Chapter membership totals by teaching sector

3.2 MEMBERSHIP & CERTIFICATION FEES

TESL Ontario membership fees are calculated based on the operating requirements of the organization as well as market research with comparable organizations.

TESL Ontario offers three types of memberships:

- certified membership,
- standard membership, and
- student/volunteer/retiree membership.

3.3 RECRUITING MEMBERSHIP

TESL Ontario Chapters are responsible for promoting membership in TESL Ontario to non-members in the language training community, by identifying non-members at Chapter events and providing them with information about membership benefits and services of TESL Ontario.

Membership brochures and certification information are available from TESL Ontario for this purpose. To request copies of the membership brochure, please contact the TESL Ontario Member Services Coordinator at membership@teslontario.org.

TESL Ontario Staff members are available to attend Chapter events to offer an information session or an information table to provide membership and certification information to attendees.

To request TESL Ontario staff presence at a Chapter event, please contact the TESL Ontario Member Services Coordinator at membership@teslontario.org.

4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 PROGRAMMING POLICY

The primary mandate of Chapters is to offer professional development in local regions. Event planning guidelines provide Chapters with flexibility in organizing and managing their events. These guidelines aim to support innovative approaches to professional development and networking opportunities for members.

PD events should meet the requirements for qualified PD as outlined in section 4.2.

PD formats can include:

- conferences,
- professional development events,
- annual Chapter meeting,
- online /webinar style events, and
- networking events

4.1.1 Event Planning & Format Guidelines (New – Added January 2025)

The following event planning and format guidelines must be followed:

Free Member Events:

Each Chapter may host a maximum of two free events for its membership annually. The combined cost of the free events must not exceed 25% of the Chapter's annual rebate. The financials for the remaining events should be supported by registration fees.

Events Supported by Registration Fees:

Events with registration fees - the registration fees should cover at minimum 60% of the event expenses. An event budget should be created including:

- **Create an expected revenue budget** based on estimated previous event attendance numbers.
- **Determine event ticket prices** based on affordability for your audience, and size and scope of event.
- **Create an expected expenditure budget** by doing your best to choose cost effective options to tailor expenses to match the expected ticket price revenue

Joint Event Planning:

Chapters may collaboratively plan events to share the costs of high-profile speakers.

- Revenue from joint events can be divided based on:
 - individual ticket sales per Chapter or
 - a pre-determined agreement for equal revenue sharing.
- **Joint event formats may include:**
 - **Simultaneous In-Person Events:**
 - Presentation in Online setting, live-streamed presentations to multiple local in-person Chapter events.
 - Individualized post-presentation discussions and networking at each individual local event.
 - Each Chapter manages its own ticket sales.
 - **Large Joint Zoom Events:**
 - Virtual event with a presentation in online setting, open to members of participating Chapters. *(Suggestion: Registration should require participants to specify their Chapter membership to assist with revenue sharing where necessary.)*

Networking and Community Connection Events:

TESL Ontario's primary professional development format is virtual, creating a demand for in-person networking opportunities. Networking events can be low-cost options, and Chapters are encouraged to offer these types of events to their members, including:

- **Employment Events/Fairs:** Local employment events / fairs connect your membership with local or virtual job opportunities.

- **Discussion Tables:** Guided discussion table topics engage members with peers on important subjects, fostering connections within their community of practice.
- **Networking Events:** Informal gatherings to encourage member interaction and relationship building.
- **Community Events:** Activities that build community connections and support.

4.1.2 Proof of Professional Development

Chapters must provide proof of PD within 10 days of the event to all event participants in one of two forms:

- PD certificate – containing the type, name, date and hours of PD of the event as well as the name of the participant (Chapter customizable PD certificate templates are available. To request a copy of the template, please contact the TESL Ontario Member Services Coordinator at membership@teslontario.org) or
- Event fees receipt, containing the type, name, date and hours of PD of the event as well as the name of the participant.

4.2 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Ongoing professional development (PD) is an important aspect of TESL Ontario certification for many reasons. It stimulates the circulation of creative ideas, innovative techniques, and new research among TESL Ontario accredited instructors. A record of PD activities signifies the academic currency and depth embedded in accreditation and lends weight to TESL Ontario's advocacy of the recognition and regulation of professional standards for the "adult ESL instructor profession" in Ontario.

PD Standard

To be recognized as PD, an activity must meet the following criteria:

1. It will increase the participants' knowledge of the theories, methods, or techniques of teaching English as a second/foreign language or their knowledge of a subject closely related to TESL/TEFL such as principles of adult learning, classroom management, diversity training, culture, multiculturalism, assessment, and technology in the classroom,
2. It will augment participants' teaching English as a second language skills and classroom performance, and
3. It is above and beyond the day-to-day requirements of the applicant's professional duties. Therefore, an activity (or a component of an activity) the applicant is required to carry out as part of their daily professional responsibilities does not count towards the PD hours required for accreditation renewal.

TESL Ontario acknowledges that certified members experience professional development regularly in the performance of their teaching responsibilities, and there are many valuable PD activities in which they may participate during work hours or personal time. The activities listed under “Activities Recognized as PD” on the TESL Ontario website are confined to those specific PD activities that can be used for the purposes of accreditation renewal.

4.2.1 PD Carryover Policy

Please note that additional PD hours completed in any given accreditation year cannot be carried over to the following accreditation year, with the exception of those hours completed during the renewal month. PD hours during the renewal month can be considered either for the current accreditation year or the next accreditation year.

4.2.2 Annual PD Audit Process

Approximately 10% of renewals due in every given month are randomly selected and receive a PD audit notice about a month prior to the renewal due date. The selected members will be required to submit (mail, fax, email, or deliver) their proof of PD by their accreditation expiry date to be eligible for accreditation renewal. A one-month grace period will be granted if the required PD is not submitted by the renewal due date. At the end of the grace period, accreditation will lapse if PD is still outstanding.

The following individuals are automatically exempt from PD audit selection process for the accreditation year/s when the recognized PD activity has been completed:

- TESL Ontario Board Members,
- members of the TESL Ontario working committees,
- members of the TESL Ontario Chapter executive,
- members of TESL Ontario volunteer working teams,
- accredited members who participated in the TESL Ontario conference for a minimum 10 hours, and
- accredited members who complete a PTCT course and apply to TESL Ontario for PTCT certificate of achievement.

4.3 NOTIFYING TESL ONTARIO OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

It is important that TESL Ontario be notified of all upcoming Chapter events. This information allows TESL Ontario to assist with the promotion of these events through posting on the main TESL Ontario events calendar, social media, member emails and newsletters. In addition, the information is provided in the TESL Ontario annual report.

4.3.1 Upcoming Events

Chapters are required to notify TESL Ontario of all upcoming professional development events, including the date, time, location and short description of the event so that the information can be put into the main TESL Ontario events calendar.

4.3.2 Event Insurance Certificates

TESL Ontario will arrange for insurance certificates for all Chapter events. To obtain an insurance certificate, please contact the TESL Ontario Office Manager at administration@teslontario.org.

5 COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC RELATIONS

5.1 MEMBERSHIP COMMUNICATIONS

TESL Ontario Chapters are responsible for communicating effectively with Chapter members in a number of areas including:

- Chapter event notifications,
- Chapter community news / initiatives, and
- Chapter Executive recruitment, notices of elections, and annual meetings.

5.1.1 Member Communications Guidelines

All Chapter member communications should:

- be written in a professional manner,
- include a Chapter logo,
- include a greeting,
- clearly identify the communication sender as the Chapter,
- include contact information for the Chapter,
- be copied to the Coordinator, Member Services and Communications at TESL Ontario, and
- include clickable links to the Chapter website where appropriate.

Chapters should never communicate to its members on matters that are not directly related to Chapter responsibilities.

5.1.2 Constant Contact

Each TESL Ontario Chapter will be provided with login details for a shared Constant Contact account. Constant Contact is an online email and electronic newsletter deployment program. This program will automatically manage the email exclusions list for the Chapters.

Chapters are required to use Constant Contact to send email communications to Chapter members. Each Chapter will use an email letterhead template that has been provided by TESL Ontario with the Chapter logo. The use of these templates will ensure a consistent brand for TESL Ontario and TESL Ontario Chapters further clarifying the Chapter relationship with TESL Ontario.

TESL Ontario will upload a new email list for each of the Chapters at the beginning of each month to ensure that the most up-to-date member contact information is being used at all times.

A user guide will be provided to each Chapter with clear instructions on how to use the email deployment program, how to create a new email, how to deploy an email to your Chapter members, how to manage email lists, and how to track email opens.

In addition to the user guide, online training is available to all Chapter executive members.

Chapters are encouraged to use the Event feature of Constant Contact for online registration of their conferences, however, this cost should be covered by the Chapter.

5.2 COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAPTER TO TESL ONTARIO

Chapters are responsible for informing TESL Ontario of the following:

- upcoming Chapter events, including – date, time, location and short description of the event for the purpose of populating the TESL Ontario event calendar. TESL Ontario should be informed of upcoming event dates **prior** to the distribution of marketing and promotional materials to avoid potential conflicts with other TESL Ontario or Chapter events.
- changes to Chapter executives,
- changes to Chapter volunteers and,
- minutes from Chapter Representative or Presidents joint meetings.

5.3 MEDIA / PUBLIC RELATIONS POLICY

TESL Ontario is a well-established and highly respected organization in the world of ESL education and learning. The services our members provide to English language learners throughout Ontario encompass

much more than language training. We have a responsibility to be open and responsive to information requests.

This Media/Public Relations policy is intended to assure that any information disclosed by TESL Ontario is timely, accurate, comprehensive, authoritative and relevant to our organization. We also want to be proactive in seeking positive media attention when opportunities arise. In addition, we need to be able to correct incorrect reporting in a timely manner.

This policy applies not only to Chapters, but also to Board and Committee members. The guidelines noted below cover all external news media including broadcast, electronic, print, social media, the internal publications of school boards, colleges/universities, community centres, and the like.

5.3.1 Media / Public Relations Guidelines

1. The principal contact with media is the public relations consultant of TESL Ontario who provides the appropriate information in the form of media releases AND who also designates, in collaboration with the Executive Director, the most appropriate spokesperson on a particular issue being queried.
2. If a reporter/editor wishes to write an article about a local region/area/chapter and/or about one of the award winners from a Chapter, the TESL Ontario PR consultant will contact the Chapter Representative or the individual Award winner and advise them of name and contact information of who will be calling, as well as the nature of story.
3. Should a reporter, producer or other news media contact a Chapter Executive member for information about TESL Ontario, a recent event, an action/event that could impact our organization, OR a topical story in your community relative to our profession, **please refer the call to TESL Ontario's Executive Director.**
4. If taking a call from the media, courtesy, professionalism and prompt response is critical. Key points to ask are:
 - a. reporter's name,
 - b. media organization,
 - c. telephone number,
 - d. email address,
 - e. deadline, and
 - f. topic they wish to discuss.
5. Remember to contact TESL Ontario's Executive Director **immediately after** you have been approached by the media with the above information.

5.3.2 Sharing News Story ideas

If you believe you have a positive news story to share with the public, please contact TESL Ontario's Executive Director.

5.3.3 Notifying TESL Ontario of Published Articles

Should you see any mentions or articles about TESL Ontario or ESL education and learning in a local community newspaper, internal publication (e.g. school board, college/university, community service centre, etc.), OR social media group outside the industry itself, please direct it to the TESL Ontario Member Services Coordinator. Since TESL Ontario does not have a paid media reporting service to alert us to any such mentions, especially in the case of internal publications, we appreciate your assistance in spotting these items.

5.4 TESL ONTARIO CHAPTER LOGO USAGE

Each Chapter received a customized version of the TESL Ontario logo in 2011 and was provided a three-year time frame with which to implement the new logos. The Chapter logo must be present on all official communications from the Chapter to its members, including email and letter communications. The logo must also be present on the Chapter website and all social media accounts.

Each Chapter must ensure that it is using the logo in accordance with the TESL Ontario corporate visual standards. The logo must not be altered in any way. This includes altering the colours of the logos, dimensions of the logo, or physical appearance of the logo.

Contact the Member Services Coordinator at membership@teslontario.org for a copy of the Visual Standards Guide.

5.5 SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

Chapters are encouraged to set up official Chapter social media accounts such as Facebook, X, LinkedIn or Instagram.

The use of social media is an important tool used to support professional development and awareness of TESL Ontario and ESL education and learning. It is important to remember that all online activity on Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram and Blogs can be tracked and traced, so courtesy and professionalism in using these media are also critical in presenting the most meaningful, relevant and respectful material.

Any Chapter that is actively engaging its members on social media must adhere to the following guidelines for social media usage under the TESL Ontario Association name.

5.5.1 General Social Media Guidelines

1. Be transparent: the views you share are yours and yours alone.
2. Be professional: everything you write is being watched so make sure you stay polite and respectful to the organization, your colleagues and your learners.
3. Don't disclose any confidential information.

5.5.2 Social Media and Online Conduct Guidelines

Chapters are encouraged to engage their members using social media. It is important that social media tools are used appropriately to raise the profile of the Association and its Chapters.

1. Do not disparage TESL Ontario or any TESL Ontario Chapters in anyway. TESL Ontario and its Chapters are all interconnected, and the organization's reputation is as well. Always be positive about the organization and its initiatives.
2. Never post anything that could be damaging to the TESL Ontario brand and/or relationships with its members, stakeholders and funding partners.
3. Do not engage in inflammatory or inappropriate discussions about TESL Ontario, TESL Ontario Chapters, parent or sister organizations or funders.
4. Always be kind, respectful and helpful in all responses to comments and questions on social media.
5. Use appropriate language at all times.
6. Chapter executives or volunteers operating social media accounts in an official capacity for the organization must protect all TESL Ontario confidential information.
7. Share/post only information that is directly related to TESL Ontario, TESL Ontario Chapters, or the ESL language training field in general.
8. Always confirm with TESL Ontario the desired responses for inquiries regarding policies and procedures of TESL Ontario before posting a response.

5.6 CHAPTER WEBSITE GUIDELINES

Chapter websites are an important communication tool. It is important that these tools be used effectively and appropriately.

1. Website must be regularly maintained by an assigned Chapter volunteer or executive.
2. Chapters are responsible for posting important information from TESL Ontario that affects all members, e.g. changes to PD or membership requirements.

3. Post in a timely fashion, information on upcoming Chapter events as well as the Annual TESL Ontario Conference.
4. Website must contain a TESL Ontario Chapter logo, displayed in accordance with the logo usage guidelines and visual standards guide.
5. Website must display contact information for the Chapter.
6. Website must provide a list of current Chapter Executive members and their positions.
7. Remove information that is excessively out of date.
8. Chapters must ensure their websites do not contain copyrighted content, images or graphics, as this could lead to infringement claims.

6 RECOGNITION AWARDS

TESL Ontario feels that it is important to recognize the dedication and commitment of Ontario's English language educators to their profession, learners and communities. TESL Ontario offers four recognition awards designed to honour these individuals.

6.1 DISTINGUISHED CONTRIBUTION AWARD

The TESL Ontario Distinguished Contribution Award is designed to recognize and honour particularly significant achievements and/or contributions to the advancement of the profession of English language educators, the English language training sector and/or TESL Ontario.

Each year up to three Distinguished Contribution Awards are presented. Nominations are submitted using an online nomination system. All nominations are presented to the TESL Ontario Board of Directors for consideration and selection of the final recipients.

Award nominations open each year in the spring and recipients are honoured at the TESL Ontario annual conference in the fall.

Nomination Overview:

Nominees must have demonstrated their commitment to the English Language Training profession over a minimum of 12 years in addition to making a significant contribution to the advancement of the English language educational sector and/or profession.

6.2 SPARKS OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

The TESL Ontario Sparks of Excellence Award is designed to recognize and acknowledge the excellence and commitment of TESL Ontario members who provide outstanding educational experiences to their students or who demonstrate exceptional leadership/mentoring expertise towards their colleagues and student teachers.

TESL Ontario presents two *Sparks of Excellence Awards* annually. Nominations are submitted using an online nomination system. All nominations are presented to a team of volunteer judges who review and score each submission. The final award recipients are determined by the two highest scored nominees.

Nominations for the Sparks of Excellence Award are accepted each spring, and winners will be presented with their awards at the TESL Ontario annual conference each fall.

Nomination Overview:

Nominees must have demonstrated their commitment to the ESL profession in one of the following ways:

- By providing an outstanding educational experience to their students, or
- By demonstrating exceptional leadership/mentoring expertise towards colleagues and/or student teachers in their workplace.

6.3 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD (NEW – ADDED JANUARY 2025)

The TESL Ontario Volunteer of the Year Award, introduced in 2025, celebrates the incredible dedication, selflessness, and positive impact of our volunteers. These individuals embody the spirit of our TESL community and make significant contributions to TESL Ontario's goals. We are honored to highlight their efforts and share their inspiring stories.

The TESL Ontario Volunteer of the Year Award is presented to an individual who:

- Demonstrates exceptional commitment, enthusiasm and reliability in their volunteer role.
- Has made a significant impact on the TESL community or the organization through their volunteer efforts.
- Exemplifies the values and goals of TESL Ontario.
- Has shown leadership, initiative, and dedication in their volunteer activities.
- Actively participates on a TESL Ontario team, committee, Chapter executive, board, etc.
- Is nominated by peers, staff, or community members for their outstanding contributions.

6.4 CHAPTER SERVICE AWARD

The TESL Ontario Chapter Service Award is designed to acknowledge the vital contributions of the volunteers who are instrumental in the success of their local TESL Ontario Chapter group. These individuals who contribute valuable skills, expertise and commitment to the success of their local community of language training professionals are nominated by peers from their local Chapter members and recognized at the Chapter level.

The award nomination and recognition process for the Chapter Service Award is carried out entirely at the Chapter level.

Each of the participating Chapters has its own award guidelines, nomination submission and evaluation procedures and communicates nomination deadlines directly to its members.

TESL Ontario will contribute a maximum of \$60 per year towards the cost of the award presentation piece presented to the winner of the Chapter Service Award for each participating Chapter. Reimbursement Claim forms for this expense can be requested from the Operations Manager at operations@teslontario.org.

7 COMPLIANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 CANADIAN ANTI-SPAM LEGISLATION (CASL)

On July 1, 2014, the Canada Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) went into effect. CASL requires that senders of all commercial/promotional emails must obtain expressed consent of opt-in from their recipients prior to sending them emails.

TESL Ontario has the 'implied consent' of all TESL Ontario members as a result of our existing business relationship with the members, and, this 'implied consent' allows TESL Ontario and TESL Ontario Chapters to send association/membership related electronic communications to members. However, renewing members will be asked to provide express consent upon their renewal each year to ensure that the organization is compliant should any of our electronic member communications be classified as marketing or promotional in nature. In addition, all new members will be asked to provide consent on their application forms.

The CASL legislation also requires that all organizations offer a method for individuals to opt-out of receiving electronic communications from the organization.

All TESL Ontario Chapters are required to comply with the Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation in the following ways:

- must offer its members a way to opt out of receiving emails from the Chapter. (This service is built into the Constant Contact email deployment program mentioned in section 5.1.2),
- must maintain a list of individuals who have requested to be removed from electronic communications lists and must ensure the individuals on that list are removed from any mass email to Chapter members. (The Constant Contact email deployment program automatically manages any opt-out lists in this manner), and
- must not sell member email addresses to third party organizations.

7.2 ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA)

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), is a law passed by the Ontario legislature that allows the government to develop specific standards of accessibility and to enforce them.

The purpose of the accessibility standards is to move organizations in Ontario forward on accessibility. The customer service standard is the first standard developed under the AODA.

The customer service standard applies to all organizations, both public and private, that provide goods or services either directly to the public or to other organizations in Ontario (third parties) and that have one or more employees in Ontario. The customer service standard requires providers to train staff on providing customer service to people with disabilities. Also, training must be provided to everyone who is involved in developing policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services.

The law requires that all TESL Ontario Chapters and their volunteers comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act by providing training to executive members who have not received training at their workplace. Also, volunteers who participate at Chapter conferences and events need to be trained.

All TESL Ontario Chapters are required to submit a proof of compliance with AODA that lists the names of all executive members with their signature attesting the completion of an AODA training.

All individuals who volunteer at a Chapter event must receive AODA training. This can be accomplished by providing the AODA Training Tips document to the volunteers and having them sign an AODA training completion form attesting that they have read and understood the training document.

Send a request to the Operations Manager at operations@teslontario.org for a copy of the AODA Employer Handbook, the AODA Training Tips document, and the AODA training completion form.

7.3 RECORD KEEPING

Financial records and their related documents must be kept for a minimum of six years from the end of the last tax year to which they relate. The tax year is the fiscal period, which runs from April 1st to March 31st for TESL Ontario and its Chapters.

All records of the minutes of meetings of the Chapter executives should be kept during the lifetime of the Chapter.

Membership lists may be discarded after one year.

Discarded documents should be shredded to protect the privacy of the members.