

38-847. Local boards

A. To the extent outlined in this section, the administration of the system and responsibility for making the provisions of the system effective for each employer are vested in a local board. The department of public safety, the Arizona game and fish department, the department of emergency and military affairs, the university of Arizona, Arizona state university, northern Arizona university, each county sheriff's office, each county attorney's office, each county parks department, each municipal fire department, each eligible fire district, each community college district, each municipal police department, the department of law, the department of liquor licenses and control, the Arizona department of agriculture, the Arizona state parks board, each Indian reservation police agency and each Indian reservation firefighting agency shall have a local board. A nonprofit corporation operating pursuant to sections 28-8423 and 28-8424 shall have one local board for all of its members. Each local board shall be constituted as follows:

1. For political subdivisions or Indian tribes, the mayor or chief elected official or a designee of the mayor or chief elected official approved by the respective governing body as chairperson, two members elected by secret ballot by members employed by the appropriate employer and two citizens, one of whom shall be the head of the merit system, or the head's designee from among the other members of the merit system, if it exists for the group of members, appointed by the mayor or chief elected official and with the approval of the governing body of the city or the governing body of the employer. The appointed two citizens shall serve on both local boards in a city or Indian tribes where both fire and police department employees are members.

2. For state agencies and nonprofit corporations operating pursuant to sections 28-8423 and 28-8424, two members elected by secret ballot by the members employed by the appropriate employer and three citizens appointed by the governor. Each state agency local board shall elect a chairperson.

3. For fire districts, the chairperson of the fire district governing board or the chairperson's designee, two members elected by secret ballot by members employed by the fire district and two citizens appointed by the chairperson of the fire district governing board, one of whom is a resident of the fire district and one of whom has experience in personnel administration but who is not required to be a resident of the fire district.

4. For joint powers authorities organized pursuant to section 48-805.01, the joint powers authority board chairperson or a designee approved by the governing body, two members elected by secret ballot by members employed by the joint powers authority and two citizens, one of whom is a resident of one of the partner entities and one of whom has experience in personnel administration but who is not required to be a resident of a partner entity.

B. On the taking effect of this system for an employer, the appointments and elections of local board members shall take place with one elective and appointive local board member serving a term ending two years after the effective date of participation for the employer and other local board members serving a term ending four years after the effective date. Thereafter, every second year, and as a vacancy occurs, an office shall be filled for a term of four years in the same manner as previously provided.

C. Each local board shall be fully constituted pursuant to subsection A of this section within sixty days after the employer's effective date of participation in the system. If the deadline is not met, on the written request of any member who is covered by the local board or the employer to the board of trustees, the board of trustees may appoint all vacancies of the local board pursuant to subsection A of this section and designate whether each appointive position is for a two-year or four-year term. If the board of trustees cannot find individuals to serve on the local board who meet the requirements of subsection A of this section, the board of trustees may appoint individuals to serve as interim local board members until qualified individuals are appointed or elected. Each local board shall meet at least twice a year. Each member of a local board, within ten days after the member's appointment or election, shall take an oath of office that, so far as it devolves on the member, the member shall diligently and honestly administer the affairs of the local board and that the member shall not knowingly violate or willingly allow to be violated any of the provisions of law applicable to the system. Within one hundred eighty days after appointment or election, each board member shall complete local board training as prescribed

by the board of trustees, including open meeting laws, ethics, legal review and fiduciary responsibilities and duties.

D. Except as limited by subsection E of this section, a local board shall have such powers as may be necessary to discharge the following duties:

1. To decide all questions of eligibility for membership and disability and in the line of duty death benefits under the system.
2. To prescribe procedures to be followed by claimants in filing applications for disability and in the line of duty death benefits.
3. To make a determination as to the right of any claimant to a disability and in the line of duty death benefit, to issue opinions on questions of whether benefits are consistent with and allowable under the system and to afford any claimant or the board of trustees, or both, a right to a rehearing on the original determination. Except as otherwise required by law, unless all parties involved in a matter presented to the local board for determination otherwise agree, the local board shall commence a hearing on the matter within ninety days after the date the matter is presented to the local board for determination. If a local board fails to commence a hearing as provided in this paragraph, on a matter presented to the local board for determination, the relief demanded by the party petitioning the local board is deemed granted and approved by the local board.
4. To request and receive from the employers and from members such information as is necessary for the proper administration of the system and action on claims for eligibility for membership and disability and in the line of duty death benefits, and to forward such information to the board of trustees.
5. To distribute, in such manner as the local board determines to be appropriate, information explaining the system received from the board of trustees.
6. To furnish the employer, the board of trustees and the legislature, on request, with such annual reports with respect to the administration of the system as are reasonable and appropriate.
7. To receive and review the actuarial valuation of the system for its group of members.
8. To receive and review reports of the financial condition and of the receipts and disbursements of the fund from the board of trustees.
9. To appoint medical boards as provided in section 38-859.
10. To sue and be sued to effectuate the duties and responsibilities set forth in this article.

E. A local board may not add to, subtract from, modify or waive any of the terms of the system, change or add to any benefits provided by the system or waive or fail to apply any requirement of eligibility for membership or disability and in the line of duty death benefits under the system. Notwithstanding any limitations periods imposed in this article, including subsection D, paragraph 3 and subsections G and H of this section, if the board of trustees determines a local board decision violates the internal revenue code or threatens to impair the system's status as a qualified plan under the internal revenue code, the local board's decision is not final and binding and the board of trustees may refrain from implementing or complying with the local board decision.

F. A local board shall establish and adopt such rules as it deems necessary for its administration and to adjudicate claims and disputes. At a minimum, the board's rules shall incorporate the model uniform rules for local board procedure that are issued by the board of trustees. All rules and decisions of a local board shall be uniformly and consistently applied to all members in similar circumstances. If a claim or dispute is presented to a local board for determination but the local board has not yet adopted uniform rules of procedure for adjudication of the claim or dispute, the local board shall adopt and use the model uniform rules of local board procedure that are issued by the board of trustees' fiduciary counsel to adjudicate the claim or dispute.

G. Except as otherwise provided in this article, any action by a majority vote of the members of a local board that is not inconsistent with the provisions of the system and the internal revenue code shall be final, conclusive and binding on all persons affected by it unless a timely application for a rehearing or appeal is filed as provided in this article. Not later than twenty days after taking action, the local board shall submit to the board of trustees the minutes from the local board meeting that include the name of the member affected by its decision, a description of the action taken and an explanation of the reasons and all documents submitted to the local board for the action taken, including the reports of a medical board. The board of trustees may require additional records from the local board or the employer or may require that the local board conduct a rehearing on the matter. The board of trustees may not implement and comply with any local board action that does not comply with the internal revenue code or that threatens to jeopardize the system's status as a qualified plan under the internal revenue code.

H. A claimant may apply for or the board of trustees may require a rehearing before the local board within the time periods prescribed in this subsection, except that if a decision of a local board violates the internal revenue code or threatens to jeopardize the system's status as a qualified plan under the internal revenue code, any limitation period for the board of trustees to require a rehearing of a local board decision does not apply. An application for a rehearing shall be filed in writing with a member of the local board or its secretary within sixty days after:

1. The applicant-claimant receives notification of the local board's original action by certified mail, by attending the meeting at which the action is taken or by receiving benefits from the system pursuant to the local board's original action, whichever occurs first.

2. The applicant-board of trustees receives notification of the local board's original action as prescribed by subsection G of this section by email or certified mail.

I. A hearing before a local board on a matter remanded from the superior court is not subject to a rehearing before the local board.

J. Decisions of local boards are subject to judicial review pursuant to title 12, chapter 7, article 6.

K. When making a ruling, determination or calculation, the local board shall be entitled to rely on information furnished by the employer, a medical board, the board of trustees, independent legal counsel or the actuary for the system.

L. Each member of a local board is entitled to one vote. A majority is necessary for a decision by the members of a local board at any meeting of the local board.

M. The local board shall adopt such bylaws as it deems desirable. The local board shall elect a secretary who may, but need not, be a member of the local board. The secretary of the local board shall keep a record and prepare minutes of all meetings in compliance with chapter 3, article 3.1 of this title and forward the minutes and all necessary communications to the board of trustees as prescribed by subsection G of this section. Within one hundred eighty days after election, the local board's secretary shall complete local board training as prescribed by the board of trustees, including open meeting laws, ethics, legal review and fiduciary responsibilities and duties.

N. The fees of the medical board and of the local board's independent legal counsel and all other expenses of the local board necessary for the administration of the system shall be paid by the employer and not the board of trustees or system at such rates and in such amounts as the local board shall approve. Each local board shall hire an independent legal counsel who is not an employee of or contracted with the employer or any employee organization and owes its duty of loyalty only to the local board in connection with its representation of the local board. The independent legal counsel may not represent a member of the plan before any local board or any judicial appeal of a local board decision. The local board's independent legal counsel shall review the model uniform rules for local board procedure that are issued by the board of trustees.

O. The local board shall issue directions to the board of trustees concerning all benefits that are to be paid from the employer's account pursuant to the provisions of the fund. The local board shall keep on file, in such manner as it may deem convenient or proper, all reports from the board of trustees and the actuary.

P. The local board and the individual members of the local board shall be indemnified from the assets of the employer for any judgment against the local board or its members, including attorney fees and costs, arising from any act, or failure to act, made in good faith pursuant to the provisions of the system, including expenses reasonably incurred in the defense of any claim relating to the act or failure to act.

Q. A local board shall submit to the board of trustees the names of the members of the local board and the local board's secretary and independent legal counsel and shall submit any changes to those positions within ten days after the change.

R. An employer and a local board shall submit any reports, data, paperwork or other materials that are requested by the board of trustees for any reason, including local board action or inaction or to investigate a complaint regarding a local board. If the board of trustees or its designee through an audit or investigation finds that the local board is not in compliance with statute or the model uniform rules for local board procedure, the board of trustees shall notify the local board of the noncompliance and the local board shall have sixty days to take corrective action. If the local board fails to take adequate corrective action, the board of trustees may act on behalf of the local board until the matter is resolved. The board of trustees or its designee shall work with the local board members to take the appropriate corrective actions, including appointing any vacant or noncompliant local board member positions, if necessary, to bring the local board and its membership, policies and procedures into compliance.