

	<u>P - §40.0</u>	<u>Policy Name:</u> Tuition Reimbursement Program	<u>Revision Date:</u>
	<u>Prepared By:</u> Human Resources		<u>Adopted Date:</u> August 7, 1996
	Revisions: July 1, 1999; August 7, 2013		

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Tuition Reimbursement Program (the “Program”) is to support employee development and enhance organizational effectiveness by providing financial assistance for approved educational opportunities that build knowledge, skills, and competencies relevant to public service. This Program is intended to encourage continuous learning, including academic, professional, and skilled trades training, while ensuring responsible stewardship of County resources. The Program is not intended to replace department-specific training or courses provided by the Department of Human Resources. It is also not intended to replace costs that may be covered by departmental budgets, such as license renewals.

B. DEFINITIONS

Career Path – A sequence of related positions or occupational areas within the organization or profession that reflects potential advancement opportunities and the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to County service.

Outside Financial Assistance – Financial support received from sources other than the employee, including but not limited to scholarships, grants, GI Bill benefits, or employer-sponsored funding.

Skilled Trades Program – A structured training program that develops technical skills in a specific trade (e.g., electrical, HVAC, plumbing, construction, automotive, or similar fields), provided through an accredited or recognized training provider.

Successful Completion – A final grade of “C” or better, or “Pass” in a pass/fail course.

Tuition – The instructional cost charged by an educational institution, excluding fees, books, materials, and other non-instructional expenses.

Workforce Need – A current or anticipated need identified by the County for skills, knowledge, certifications, or occupational capabilities that enhance organizational capacity or future workforce

readiness, excluding training or education required to meet minimum qualifications, maintain employment, or fulfill ongoing job requirements.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees

Employees are responsible for complying with all requirements of this policy, including:

- a. Submitting a Tuition Reimbursement Request prior to course enrollment;
- b. Demonstrating that the course or program meets eligibility criteria;
- c. Completing coursework outside of scheduled work hours unless otherwise approved by their immediate supervisor;
- d. Successfully completing the course;
- e. Submitting required documentation, including proof of payment, itemized tuition costs, and proof of successful completion; and
- f. Disclosing any Outside Financial Assistance.

Supervisors/Department Heads

Supervisor involvement is not required for tuition reimbursement requests unless the class or program impacts the employee's work schedule or operational responsibilities. In such cases, the supervisor will review and approve any requested schedule adjustments.

Human Resources

Human Resources is responsible for:

- a. Administering and interpreting the Tuition Reimbursement Program;
- b. Reviewing requests for compliance with policy requirements;
- c. Approving or denying requests based on eligibility and available funding;
- d. Establishing and communicating annual funding limits;
- e. Ensuring consistent application of the policy; and
- f. Processing reimbursements upon verification of required documentation.

D. POLICY

The County provides tuition reimbursement to eligible employees for approved courses and programs in accordance with the following:

1. Employee Eligibility

Employees must meet all of the following criteria to be eligible:

- a. Be a permanent full-time or part-time employee;
- b. Have successfully completed the probationary period;
- c. Have received no disciplinary action of written reprimand or higher in the prior six months; and
- d. Obtain required approvals prior to the start of the course or program.

Participation in the Program is subject to available funding and is not guaranteed. Employees serving an extended probationary period due to performance or conduct concerns are not eligible

for the Program until satisfactory completion of the probationary period.

Nothing in this policy guarantees that the employee will be promoted upon completion of the course. Likewise, employees will not receive additional compensation, stipend, or incentive pay tied to the completion of any course taken pursuant to this Program.

2. Course and Program Eligibility

Courses, programs, or certifications must:

- a. Be related to the employee's current position, a reasonable career path within the County, or a workforce need;
- b. Be offered by an accredited institution or recognized training provider;
- c. Be voluntary and not required as a condition of employment;
- d. Not be part of County-provided training or professional development; and
- e. Be taken outside scheduled work hours unless otherwise approved.

Eligible programs may include, but are not limited to, GED, degree programs, certificate programs, professional certifications, and skilled trades training that meet the above criteria.

3. Ineligible Courses and Programs

The following are not eligible for reimbursement:

- a. Training required to meet minimum qualifications of a position;
- b. Mandatory certifications, licensure, or continuing education required to maintain employment;
- c. Classes provided through County training and development programs;
- d. Courses not reasonably related to County service or workforce development; and
- e. Programs that result in a stipend, bonus, or other direct financial incentive upon completion.

4. Changes, Cancellations, or Non-Fulfillment of Course Requirements

- a. If the employee elects to register for a course different from the one approved, the employee is required to submit a new Tuition Reimbursement Request to Human Resources for approval.
- b. An employee must notify Human Resources within seven (7) calendar days of dropping or canceling a course or failing to fulfill the course requirements.
- c. Reimbursement will not be provided for course cancellations.

5. Covered Expenses

- a. Reimbursement is limited to tuition costs only.
- b. The following expenses are not eligible:
 - Books, materials, supplies, or equipment;
 - Application, registration, testing, or exam fees;
 - Technology, lab, or administrative fees;
 - Late fees or penalties.

Employees must provide documentation clearly identifying tuition separate from other charges.

6. Approval Process

- a. Employees must submit a Tuition Reimbursement Request to Human Resources for approval prior to the course start date; Human Resources will notify the employee of approval status within ten business days.
- b. Approval is contingent upon compliance with this policy and availability of funds; and
- c. Requests submitted after the course start date will not be considered.

7. Reimbursement Requirements

To receive reimbursement, employees must:

- a. Successfully complete the course;
- b. Submit proof of successful completion;
- c. Submit proof of tuition payment and itemized billing; and
- d. Provide documentation of any outside assistance received.

Reimbursement is limited to the tuition amount paid by the employee after all other funding sources are applied.

Failure to disclose any outside financial assistance will require the employee to repay all sums expended by the County for the course(s) in which the Outside Financial Assistance was received by the employee. Such failure to report may result in disciplinary action, consistent with the County's disciplinary policy. Receipt of student loans will not preclude an employee from receiving tuition reimbursement.

8. Funding Limits

The County will establish a maximum reimbursement per employee each fiscal year by the Department of Human Resources. GED, undergraduate degree programs and certificates, professional certifications, and skilled trades training are reimbursable at 100% of the tuition cost for eligible classes. Graduate level classes and certificate programs are reimbursable at 75% of the tuition cost for eligible classes. All reimbursements are subject to budget availability.

9. Repayment Requirement

Employees who voluntarily separate from County employment within twelve (12) months of receiving tuition reimbursement must repay the full amount of reimbursement received during that period. Repayment will not be required if the employee is subject to a Reduction in Force; in the event of the employee's death; or due to the serious illness/injury of the employee.

As a condition of participation in the Tuition Reimbursement Program, employees are required to sign an acknowledgment of this repayment obligation prior to receiving reimbursement. Any outstanding balance owed to the County under this provision may be deducted from the employee's final paycheck to the extent permitted by law. If the final paycheck is insufficient to

satisfy the obligation, the employee remains responsible for repayment of the remaining balance.

10. Taxes

Employees should consult with a tax professional to determine whether tuition reimbursement is considered income and may be subject to taxation.

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