

<b>Policy Title:</b>	<b>Applies to:</b>	<b>Reference #</b>
<b>Educational Assistance (EA) Program Policy</b>	<b>All City employees</b>	<b>101-HR-11</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>Dates:</b>	<b>Total # of Pages</b>
<b>Executive Director, Organization &amp; People</b>	<b>Effective: 18-Dec-2017</b> <b>Revision:</b> <b>Next Review: 01-Dec-2018</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Authority:</b>		
<b>Policy 001-GEN-10</b>		

## 1.0 PURPOSE

The City of Regina supports formal education as a method for enhancing employee knowledge and building future capacity.

This policy establishes a process and guidelines for awarding financial assistance to employees that are pursuing further education to support their career with the City.

## 2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all permanent employees at the City of Regina and casual employees with two or more years of full-time continuous service. Term and probationary employees are eligible to apply for assistance upon completion of six months full-time continuous service and a successful performance review.

## 3.0 POLICY DEFINITIONS

### **Educational assistance**

Pre-approved financial support that is administered by way of reimbursement for eligible expenses upon successful completion of post-secondary courses. Funds are awarded at 100% to a maximum of \$1200 per employee per calendar year.

### **Eligible training**

Courses must be offered by a professional association or accredited post-secondary institution that is recognized by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education.

### **Proof of registration**

At the time of application, employees are required to upload supporting documents that confirm registration in the courses for which funding is being requested. Applications will not be approved without proof of registration.

**Eligible expenses**

- Eligible expenses include tuition, books, materials, and other compulsory fees (i.e. examination fees, course differential fees, lab fees, service fees, U-Pass, student union fees, and recreational fees).
- Health and Dental Insurance is not eligible for reimbursement being that this is an employee benefit offered through the City.
- Parking, travel costs, interest fees, and late penalties are not eligible expenses.

**Eligible employees**

- Permanent employees
- Casual employees with two or more years of **full-time continuous service**.
- Probationary and Term employees with at least six months of full-time continuous service and completion of a successful performance review.

**Return Service Obligation (RSO)**

Funds awarded through Educational Assistance are considered a financial loan that is repayable by working for the City of Regina for a prescribed period of time. Continuous employment must be maintained for the entire RSO period, beginning on the first day of the first full month following reimbursement.

**Return Service Agreement (RSA)**

In submitting an application for assistance, employees are pursuing a contractual agreement with the City of Regina to exchange financial support for a requisite period of continued employment. RSAs are administered by People and Organizational Culture (P&OC) and become active at the time of reimbursement.

**Request for Reimbursement**

This form is to be filled out by employees after completion of their pre-approved course(s). Request for Reimbursement must be submitted to Manager with accompanying support documentation (receipts and record of grades etc.) for review and sign off prior to being submitted to HR. This form is available on CityConnect.

**4.0 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES****Employees**

- Demonstrating commitment to career planning and associated learning activities.
- Developing an action plan that clearly identifies training and educational needs. This plan should be reviewed with supervisor and/or manager prior to submitting application.
- Submitting Proof of Registration at the time of application.
- Immediately advising P&OC of *any* changes to your studies, including application details, dropping a course, or unsuccessful completion of a class.
- Ensuring educational endeavours do not interfere with regular duties and performance continues to meet expectations.
- Submitting the following information within 60 days of successful course completion:
  - (a) Request for Reimbursement form,
  - (b) detailed receipt(s) of monies paid, and
  - (c) statement of grades and/or certificate of completion.
- Ensuring fulfilment of terms outlined in the Return Service Agreement.

*Failure to advise HR of any change in circumstances or application details may result in employee becoming ineligible to receive assistance for a minimum of one year.*

### Managers

- Meeting with employee to review and discuss application and education plan.
- Approval process and ensuring adherence to guidelines established in this policy.
- Monitoring educational progress as part of employee review process.
- Ensuring educational endeavours do not interfere with regular performance and duties.
- Ensuring fulfilment of terms outlined in the Return Service Agreement.

### People and Organizational Culture

- Overseeing assessment and approval of requests for educational assistance.
- Administering, maintaining, and monitoring the policy, forms, and process on behalf of the corporation.
- Providing guidance and support to Managers in the application of this policy.
- Administering reimbursements and return service agreements.
- Managing the annual Educational Assistance budget.

## 5.0 OPERATING GUIDELINES

### Budget

Educational Assistance is a corporate program that is funded annually as part of the overall budgetary process, as determined by City Council. Budget is allocated and governed for use within each calendar year.

### Program Criteria

Approved learning requests must satisfy *one* or more of the following criteria:

- (a) The request is relevant to the employee's current role and will strengthen their contribution to the organization.
- (b) The request will assist the employee in further developing their career with the City.
- (c) The request is consistent with the organization's strategic direction and will help advance the City's knowledge and practices.

Mandatory training, seminars, conferences, and workshops are *not* covered by this policy and ineligible for funding through this program.

### Process for Applying

Educational Assistance may be requested at any time during the year using the online application (City Connect) and following process:

- Step 1. Employee discusses learning objectives and educational assistance with their Manager.
- Step 2. Employee completes the online application for Educational Assistance and attaches Proof of Registration as an image or pdf file. This information is sent to the employee's Manager for review and consideration.
- Step 3. Manager approves or denies application for funding. Approval is forwarded to HR for review and administration.
- Step 4. P&OC will contact applicants (cc. manager) by email (or intra-office mail) within 3 business days to confirm approval for funding.

### **Allocation of Funds**

Successful applicants are eligible to receive funding up to \$1200 Canadian currency per calendar year. Funds are allocated based on total fees estimated at the time of application.

### **Time and Attendance**

Employees are required to make arrangements with their supervisor/manager for time off (paid or unpaid time) in the event that their approved course and/or examination is scheduled during working hours.

Members of CUPE Local 7 and 21 or CMM are eligible for time off to write course examinations [see Collective Bargaining Agreement Articles: 4A(3) for CUPE Local 21; Article 4A(7) for CUPE Local 7; and Article 4A(5) for CMM].

### **Reimbursement**

The reimbursement process should be initiated as soon as an employee receives their final grades and/or notice of successful completion. Reimbursement is issued alongside an employee's regular pay as a non-taxable benefit; 5 business days are required for the processing of all receipts.

Requests for Reimbursement must be received within 60 days of successful course completion. Requests that extend beyond 60 days will only be processed under exceptional circumstances and through prior arrangements with the P&OC Department.

For courses that end in the month of December—where grades are not released until January of the following calendar year—reimbursement will be available until the end of March. This will allow students at least 60 days for administration, processing, and submission of receipts following the completion of their course.

In the event that an employee discontinues working for the City, they are not entitled to receive any funding that has been allocated through the educational assistance program.

If an employee does not achieve a passing grade and/or has to drop a course for personal, health, or workload reasons, a new application may be submitted at the time of re-registration for the course. This should be clearly specified at the time of application. Under these circumstances, the employee will not be reimbursed for the incomplete course, but will be funded at such time that the course is successfully completed.

### **Process for Reimbursement**

- Step 1. Employee acquires a copy of final grades and/or record of course completion.
- Step 2. Employee assembles itemized receipts for course expenses that were pre-approved at the time of application.
- Step 3. Employee completes the Request for Reimbursement Form and attaches documentation from Step 1 and Step 2.
- Step 4. Form and attachments are sent to Manager for verification.
- Step 5. Form and attachments are sent to HR for administration.

### **Agreement and Return Service**

Funding awarded through the EA program is accumulative in nature; return service obligations are determined by the dollar value of the entire benefit that has been invested in an employee's education.

Reimbursement is subject to the fulfilment of all provisions outlined in this program policy and the Return Service Agreement.

RSAs become active on the first day of the month following an employee's most recent reimbursement. Under Educational Assistance, employees agree to fulfil 6 months of return service for investments up to \$5000.

In the event that an employee is approved for additional funding while serving an existing RSA, their active repayment period ends immediately and reverts to zero. Their obligation is revised to now reflect the accumulative, total dollar investment.

If the total investment exceeds \$5000, the employee's obligation is increased by 6 months for every additional \$5000 dollars (this formula aligns with the Long-term Learning program).

**Termination of Agreement**

If an employee fails to maintain their employment or contravenes this policy, the cash value of the service agreement must be returned to the organization. The owed amount will be deducted from an employee's final pay unless alternate arrangements have been made with P&OC regarding a satisfactory repayment plan.

The dollar amount will be determined on a pro-rated basis using the following calculation:

$$\frac{\text{Remaining Months in RSO}}{\text{Total Months in RSO}} \times \text{Funds reimbursed to date} = \text{Funds owed to the City of Regina}$$

If an employee discontinues employment with the City of Regina prior to beginning their RSO, the full amount of funds issued to date are owed back to the organization.

**6.0 ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A: Transitioning of Tuition Subsidy Return Service Agreements

## Appendix A: Transitioning of Tuition Subsidy Return Service Agreements

Employees that are working return service under the Tuition Subsidy program will be transitioned to the new policy and adjusted to reflect the new RSO calculation effective January 1, 2018.

### Transitioning Example 1:

An employee attended school last year and received funding for \$1200 through the Tuition Subsidy Program. They have served 2 months of their 12-month RSO and now have re-applied for funding under the new Educational Assistance Program. Their application is approved, granting them the estimated expense of \$800 for the year. Upon completion of this training, the City of Regina will have invested \$2000 on this employee's development. According to the new program, they will now have a return service obligation of 6 months upon completion of their current course, as the total dollar investment is still below \$5000.

### Transitioning Example 2:

An employee has attended school for the last two years and has received funding that totals \$4500 through the Tuition Subsidy Program. They have served 8 months of their 45-month RSO under the Tuition Subsidy Program and have now applied for Educational Assistance under the new policy. Their application is approved, granting them their estimated request for an additional \$1000 to attend school this year. Under the new policy, this employee will have a 6-month obligation for this year's investment of \$1000.

This employee's prior RSA from Tuition Subsidy is being grandfathered into the new program; the 45-month obligation is adjusted to 6 months, as the investment under the old policy (\$4500) was less than \$5000.

$$\$4500 \text{ tuition subsidy (adjusted to 6 months)} + \$1000 \text{ educational assistance (6 months)} = \$5500 \text{ (12 months)}$$

The total investment in the employee's education now totals \$5500—falling within the 12-month threshold for a total investment between \$5,001 and \$10,000. This new RSA will become active at such time that the employee submits their next Request for Reimbursement.

### Transitioning Example 3:

An employee has attended school for the last two years and has received funding that totals \$6500 through the Tuition Subsidy Program. They have served 8 months of their 65 month RSO under the Tuition Subsidy Program. Their RSO will be transitioned into the new program, which translates into 12 months return service based on the organizations total investment of \$6500 in the employee's education. This new RSO period begins on January 1, 2018.

Return Service Obligation (RSO) Reference Chart			
< \$5,000	6 Months	\$15,000 – \$19,999	24 Months
\$5,001 – \$9,999	12 Months	\$20,000 – \$24,999	30 Months
\$10,000 – \$14,999	18 Months	\$25,000 >	36 Months