

City of North Port Educational Assistance Program

Purpose

By promoting a climate of lifelong learning, the City of North Port seeks to develop an educated and highly skilled workforce that will move the City toward accomplishment of its mission and goals.

The policy is intended to fund the development of broad education and knowledge that employees can apply as they grow with the City.

Policy

Eligibility:

Financial assistance shall be available to full-time Regular employees who have completed one (1) year of continuous City service.

To remain eligible, employees must remain on the active payroll and be performing their job satisfactorily through the completion of each course.

Satisfactory job performance requires the employee not having a written reprimand, an action plan and has a satisfactory performance evaluation within a 12-month period.

In order to qualify for reimbursement, each course must be approved for reimbursement by the Department Director prior to both registration and the start date for that course.

To maximize the City's and employees' investment, courses must be taken for transferable college credit and through an institution with regional accreditation from one of these six (6) agencies:

- Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges
- North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Final grade of "A" or "B" (or "Pass" if course is Pass/Fail) or "C" must be earned; no reimbursement will be provided for classes resulting in grade below C.

Courses should be related to the employee's current job duties or a foreseeable future position in the City in order to be eligible for educational assistance. The City has sole discretion to determine whether a course relates to an employee's current job duties or a foreseeable future position. (NOTE: Courses leading to professional designations, certifications or licenses, if approved by Manager level leader or above, may also be considered for reimbursement under this program).

Responsibilities:

Employees will get pre-approval for each course and complete all required paperwork in accordance with the procedures.

Reimbursement:

Expenses eligible for reimbursement include tuition, books, lab fees, parking permits, application fees, processing fees, administration fees, and graduation fees (excluding graduation attire).

Reimbursement up to \$3,500 per fiscal year shall be subject to the availability of funds. (Proposal: Payment for tuition expenses will be capped at a lifetime maximum of \$50,000. The employee will be responsible for managing and tracking his/her expenses in the program and for any taxes owed on tuition reimbursement monies he or she receives).

Final grades and receipts are to be submitted within 30 days of course completion, after which payment will be processed based on the following grade scale:

A=100%

B =75%

C=50%

below C=0%

Tuition for approved courses taken pass/fail will be reimbursed at 75% for a passing grade.

Text books for approved courses will be reimbursed at 50% of the cost with a grade of C or above.

An employee will be required to reimburse the City for educational assistance if he/she leaves employment within one year of completion of the course.

Because the City is making an investment in the team member's development, the team member is expected to remain in good standing and employed with the City for a period of one year following the last date of reimbursement.

If an employee resigns without good reason or their employment is terminated for cause, they will be responsible for re-paying the pro-rated amount of the aggregate reimbursement based upon the number of months remaining in that one-year period.

While tuition reimbursement is expected to enhance employees' performance and professional abilities, the City of North Port cannot guarantee that participation in formal education will entitle any team member to advancement, a different job assignment, or pay increases.

Procedures

1. Employee gets pre-approval from Department Director for the course by filling out the **Educational Assistance Request Form**.
2. Department Director: Reviews application in terms of employee's ability to complete course(s) without interfering with normal work schedule; completes Department approval section and signs and dates application.
3. Employee returns form to Human Resources.
4. Office of Human Resources: Confirms eligibility and verifies balance.
5. Employee: Upon successful completion of course, sends course documentation (grades, proof of tuition cost and proof of payment) to Office of Human Resources. Reimbursement will not be made if the course documentation is not received within 30 days of course completion.
6. Human Resources: Verifies successful completion of course and authorizes tuition reimbursement payment to employee through the regular payroll system.
7. Please allow **(1-2 pay periods)?** after providing the required documentation for reimbursement to the Office of Human Resources for your tuition reimbursement to be processed with the regular payroll and paid to you in your paycheck or directly deposited into your bank account if you have elected direct deposit for your paycheck. (If you have elected more than one bank account for your direct deposit, your reimbursement will be distributed according to your account allocations.)