

Education Refund Program

Policy

1.0 Overview:

1.1 The City and County of Denver values its employees and is invested in their professional and personal development. The city encourages a culture of continuous learning and is committed to providing employees opportunities to further their development.

1.2 The Education Refund Program reimburses employees for accredited coursework up to \$1,500 per employee per calendar year. This program is intended for tuition reimbursement for courses taken at accredited institutions in degree programs, licensure requirements and examinations, and certifications requirements and examinations not otherwise covered by department/agency budgets. Additional fees, books, entrance examinations, preparation courses for exams, or doctorate studies (unless needed for current position) etc. are not eligible expenses under the program. Reimbursements may be granted until program budgeted annual funds run out.

1.3 Reimbursements are granted under the terms of this policy and the City Ordinance Section 18 Article 8. Should there be a conflict between this policy and the City Ordinance, the City Ordinance controls. Should there be a conflict between this policy and any applicable collective bargaining agreement, the collective bargaining agreement shall take precedence.

1.4 The Education Refund Program reimburses employees for accredited coursework up to \$1,500 per employee per calendar year. The maximum reimbursement amount an employee may receive in a calendar year is \$1,500, regardless of when the employee applies for the reimbursement, completes the course or examination, or when the employee begins the reimbursement process.

2.0 Eligibility Criteria:

Employees shall be eligible for the program according to the following criteria: outlined in City Ordinance Section 18 Article 8. Only applicants who have applied and have been accepted will be reimbursed.

- This policy applies to all unlimited employees who are regularly scheduled to work 20 or more hours per week;
- Persons in limited positions; on-call, temporary, seasonal, trainee, contract, or positions in which the incumbent is paid according to the community rate schedule are not eligible;
- Persons who have completed at least one (1) year of continuous service at the time of application;
- Persons who received a Successful or above rating on their most recent annual performance review;
- Persons with no formal disciplinary actions in the twelve months immediately preceding the application date and throughout the program participation;
- Persons who have informed their direct supervisor and request reimbursement through this program before the course begins; and
- Persons who conduct themselves ethically and professionally throughout their pursuit of education.

- Degree program coursework will be reimbursed as follows:
 - Up to 100% of the cost of the course (up to \$1,500) can be reimbursed for a grade of A for coursework associated with an accredited degree program.
 - Up to 80% of the cost of the course can be reimbursed for a B for coursework associated with an accredited degree program.
 - Up to 60% of the cost of the course can be reimbursed for a C for coursework associated with an accredited degree program.
 - Only grades that are a C or above will be reimbursed. Grades of a C- or lower, or a grade of failing, are not eligible for reimbursement.
- Certification and licensure coursework must receive a passing grade of C or better, or pass for pass/fail coursework will be reimbursed as follows:
 - Up to 100% of the cost of the course (up to \$1,500) can be reimbursed for a passing grade for pass/fail coursework or an A in any coursework associated with certification or licensure.
 - Up to 80% can be reimbursed for a B in any coursework associated with certification and licensure.
 - Up to 60% can be reimbursed for a C in any coursework associated with certification and licensure.
 - Only grades that are a C or above will be reimbursed. Grades of a C- or lower, or a grade of failing, are not eligible for reimbursement.
- Certification and/or licensure examination fees shall be reimbursed up to a max of \$1,500 per employee per calendar year.

3.0 Funds:

Annual funding for the Educational Refund Program shall be determined each year by city council. All eligible participants will be chosen to maximize allocated budget. If more applicants apply than budget allows to participate, participants will be selected by lottery from eligible applicants. Employees who are approved will receive reimbursement on their paycheck for the approved amount.

4.0 Employee Responsibilities:

4.1 Employees who participate in the program are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with the city's policies, procedures, Career Service Rules, Executive Orders, and reputation both in the classroom and their work environment. Only applicants who have applied, been accepted, and submit proof of passing grade will be reimbursed. Participants are required to submit an unofficial transcript or grade report at the end of the course to verify grades, and proof of payment for reimbursement. These materials need to be provided within 90 days of course completion to the program administrator. If proof of a passing grade is not received within 90 days of course completion, no reimbursement will be made. Participants are also expected to notify their supervisor and OHR of any conduct violations.

4.2 Participation in this program is voluntary and an investment in professional development. It is an opportunity for participants to expand their skills in furthering their job and career with the city. Because this is voluntary, participants may not attend classes (whether in person or online) or complete coursework during work time.

4.3 Reimbursements will be awarded for any one course, license, certificate taken from any accredited school or college that are relevant to the employee's position, and/or attempted to better skills and abilities that enable the employee to perform more successfully in their job or expand beyond their role. Funding is limited and not all who apply will be selected for reimbursement.

4.4 The employee is responsible for the following:

- Submitting application by deadline
- Disclosing the Education Refund Program and participation on any applicable forms or documentation, including tax statements
- Funding any other required course expenditures not covered by the program
- Notifying OHR in the event of withdrawing from the course, receiving a non-passing grade, or loss of academic standing

4.5 Conditions regarding reimbursement through the Education Refund Program:

- Employees must request reimbursement within 90 days of course completion. If this is not done, the employee will not receive funding.
- If the employee separates from the city within one year of completing the course due to termination, resignation or retirement the employee is required to reimburse the city for money received through the Education Refund Program for that course. As a condition of participating in the Education Refund Program, employees must authorize the city to deduct money from the employee's paycheck(s) for this purpose.
- If an employee is approved for reimbursement but does not receive a passing grade (C or better or pass for pass/fail coursework) the employee will not receive funding.
- If an employee is approved for reimbursement, but withdraws from or otherwise does not complete the course, the employee will not receive funding.

5.0 Approval Process:

5.1 Eligible participants must submit the online application by the deadline. Applications are reviewed multiple times per calendar year. Applications must be submitted before the course start date, and received by the deadline. Only one course, certificate or license will be reimbursed per applicant every cycle until the applicant has reached \$1,500.

5.2 The Office of Human Resources (OHR) through the Educational Refund Committee will review the proposed course to determine the eligibility. The Educational Refund Program is administered by the Office of Human Resources and funding is appropriated by city council on a fiscal year basis. The maximum annual reimbursement per employee is \$1,500 per calendar year.

The following types of coursework are eligible for the program:

- Coursework that is related to the work of the eligible employee
- Coursework that will enhance promotability within the City and County of Denver
- Coursework taken to obtain or maintain any professional certification or license necessary for the performance of the employee's job unless covered by existing agency specific budget.

5.3 If an employee is not approved for reimbursement during one application cycle, the employee may apply again at the next application cycle.

5.4 If an employee is approved for reimbursement for less than \$1,500 during one application cycle, the employee may apply again during the next application cycle for funds, but an employee's total reimbursement for the calendar year cannot exceed \$1,500.

5.5 The Education Refund Program reimburses employees for accredited coursework up to \$1,500 per employee per calendar year. The maximum reimbursement amount an employee may receive in a calendar year is \$1,500, regardless of when the employee applies for the reimbursement, completes the course or examination, or when the employee begins the reimbursement process.

6.0 Reimbursable and Non- Reimbursable Costs:

6.1 Reimbursable costs, upon proof of grade and payment of course include:

- Tuition for coursework in which the employee received a passing grade of a C or better or pass for pass/fail coursework.
- Tuition for online coursework; C or better or pass for pass/fail coursework.
- Laboratory fees
- Exams to obtain or maintain professional certifications or licenses

6.2 Non-Reimbursable Costs include:

- Textbooks
- Parking
- Travel
- Application fees
- Student association fees
- Discount programs
- Exam preparation programs
- Failed, withdrawn, or not successfully passed coursework.
- Doctorate coursework, unless needed for current position

7.0 Reimbursement Process:

7.1 Upon course or examination completion, the program participants will submit proof of passing grade and payment to the program administrator within 90 days of course completion. Only passing, A, B, and C grades will be reimbursed. All participants who have received reimbursable grades will have the approved amount added to the employee paycheck.

7.2 The Program Administrator is responsible for tracking if the employees remain with the City and County of Denver for one year after reimbursement.

8.0 Administration and Disclaimers:

8.1 Participation in this program is entirely optional and voluntary, and is a privilege of employment. Participation is not guaranteed, nor does it guarantee career advancement or promotion. Participation must not interfere with job duties or the employee's performance and must be approved by the employee's immediate supervisor. The employee is expected to attend classes (whether in person or online) and complete coursework on their own time, outside business hours. Because the program is funded with a set amount of money each year and available to all employees, funding is not guaranteed for all who apply.

8.2 The course may not interfere with the employee's job performance. If job performance is negatively affected, the direct supervisor is responsible for documenting and notifying the appropriate OHR representative.

8.3 If the employee receives a disciplinary action or performance review below Successful while enrolled in coursework approved for reimbursement, the employee is no longer eligible for reimbursement.

8.4 Coursework that is paid for by grants or scholarships are not eligible for reimbursement. Employees receiving a loan for the course are still eligible to apply for reimbursement.

8.5 The city reserves the right to modify, terminate, or change this policy at any time.