

## **City of Amarillo Personnel Policies and Procedures**

Policy Title: Education Assistance  
Effective Date: October 1, 2019  
Approval Date: July 18, 2019  
Approved By: Jared Miller, City Manager  
Mitchell Normand, Director of Human Resources

### **I. Purpose**

This program is intended to provide an opportunity and an incentive for employees to increase their individual level of education and professional expertise, ultimately improving the quality of service provided to the community. Assistance is not an employee entitlement, but a management prerogative to enhance employee performance of official duties. Subject to an annual review of the availability of funds, education assistance may be available to eligible employees in accordance with the rules, procedures and requirements outlined in this document.

This policy is designed to:

1. Promote professional growth and development of employees.
2. Encourage the development of skills, knowledge and abilities that will improve opportunities for career advancement.
3. Promote consistency regarding the administration of this program throughout the organization.

### **II. Responsibilities**

Below are the responsibilities of each person involved in the education assistance request process:

Employee

1. Ensure all required documents are returned to the appropriate party by the designated deadlines.
2. Meet requirements stipulated by this policy for continued eligibility.

Supervisor

1. Confirm employee's eligibility upon receipt of a request.
2. Confirm the request is received in a timely manner in accordance with this policy.
3. Confirm all submitted documentation satisfy the requirements for consideration.
4. Confirm request is within policy limit.
5. Give the first level of approval prior to the Department Director's approval or deny the request.

Department Director

1. Confirm employee meets eligibility requirements.
2. Ensure request was received timely in accordance with this policy.

3. Verify request is within policy limit.
4. Verify available funding.
5. Grant final departmental approval before submitting request form to the respective City Management designee.
6. Ensure approved requests are processed timely.

Human Resources Department

1. Confirm request satisfies requirements established by this policy.
2. Ensure consistent administration of policy organization-wide.

III. Procedures

- A. Employees must meet the following requirements in order to be eligible for consideration to participate in the Education Assistance program:
  1. Full-time employment status for one continuous year and successful completion of probation prior to the date of request.
  2. Satisfactory rating on most recent performance appraisal.
  3. No disciplinary action one year immediately prior to date of the request.
  4. No performance issues and must be in good standing in the department as determined by the Department Director, or designee.
- B. Reimbursement/funding of eligible education expenses must be approved by the Department Director and City Manager, or designee, prior to any payments being made.
- C. Priority will be given to participants pursuing course(s)/certification(s) related to the employee's current position or career advancement opportunity within the City of Amarillo.
- D. Education covered by this policy should be pursued outside of normal work hours. In instances where classes are only available during the employee's normal working hours, the employee is responsible for seeking supervisor approval for leave and to apply an eligible leave accrual to the absence. A supervisor may exercise discretion in allowing an employee to temporarily assume a flexible schedule. Any work scheduling to accommodate class time must be approved by the Department Director in advance of registration; and, for continuing students, shall be reviewed every semester/session. Approval of such schedule accommodations is at the discretion of the Department Director and approval is not guaranteed. Approval for a modified schedule may be revoked at anytime for any reason by the Department Director.
- E. An employee receiving external funding from an alternate source (e.g. scholarships, grants, or other organizations) may only submit eligible expenses not covered by the external-funding agent.
- F. Ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to, late fees, finance charges, delinquent balances, books, supplies, travel expenses.
- G. All requests for education assistance and/or reimbursement must be completed on the *Request for Education Assistance Form (Attachment A)* and advanced to your Department Director at least 30 days prior to the start date of any class or exam date. A detailed invoice, degree plan and confirmation of enrollment must be submitted with the request for assistance.

If a request for tuition reimbursement is submitted without the required documentation, the request will be considered incomplete and will be automatically denied.

- H. If the employee terminates prior to satisfying the service requirements stipulated by this policy and fails to repay the full amount owed, the remaining balance will be deducted from the employee's terminating pay to the extent allowable by law. If the employee's terminating pay does not cover the remaining balance, the employee will be required to make the necessary payments to the City of Amarillo after separating service. In the event any portion of the indebtedness to the City of Amarillo is collected through judicial proceedings by an attorney, the separated employee will be responsible for paying all reasonable attorney's fees and costs for collection which fees and costs will in no event be less than 10% of the amount then owing.
- I. All requests for reimbursement will be processed by the department after an employee returns proof of successful completion of the semester/session reimbursement is being requested.
- J. Certifications/licenses required as a condition of continued employment are not subject to the conditions of this policy.
- K. The City of Amarillo reserves the right to modify this policy at anytime. The education assistance program is not an entitlement and continuation of this program is contingent on funding availability. Additionally, tuition assistance may cease at anytime as determined by the City Manager or Department Director.

#### IV. GED

- A. The City of Amarillo will pay the cost of the GED examination, not to exceed \$150, for eligible employees.
- B. Employees may be granted approved leave to take their examinations with prior supervisory approval. Employees may be granted up to eight (8) hours of excused leave with pay to take their examination. Participants are required to complete the GED Assessment Service at the Downtown Library and must provide proof of completion prior to submitting request to take the GED exam. Employees will be required to provide their supervisor proof of registration for the examination and proof of completion of the examination upon returning to work. Failure to provide required documentation will result in the absence being unexcused without pay and may result in disciplinary action up to, and including, termination.
- C. The City of Amarillo will pay for an eligible employee to take their GED one time. Additionally, an employee must satisfy all testing requirements within a six (6) month time frame in order to receive time off with pay to complete their examinations. If an employee fails to complete all exams in the six (6) month window, the employee may request time off to take an exam but will need to charge the absence to an eligible leave accrual.

#### V. Vocational Education/Certification

An employee may be eligible to participate in a certification course related to their field of work. A department may pay the full expense of the course in advance of the employee's participation or elect to reimburse the employee upon successful completion of the course.

In order to be eligible for participation, the employee must complete the *Request for Education Assistance Form (Attachment A)* and return it to their supervisor.

- A. If the course is being offered through the City of Amarillo, the employee must return the completed *Request for Education Assistance Form (Attachment A)* by the designated deadline.
- B. Voluntary participation in any course outside of working hours will be at the discretion of the employee and not considered hours worked. An employee wishing to pursue a course during work hours will need to submit their request to their supervisor. Final approval will be made by the Department Director.
- C. Employees must satisfy a one year service requirement commencing the completion date of the course.

#### Service Requirement

- D. If an employee drops the course or does not receive a “Pass” score, they will be responsible for repayment of the full cost of the course. The employee will have 10 business days to make full repayment. If full repayment is not made within 10 business days, the outstanding amount due will be payroll deducted from the employee’s check. Payroll deductions will automatically commence the first pay period following the ten (10) day repayment period. Repayments made via payroll deduct may not exceed 26 pay periods and biweekly deduction amounts will not be less than 5% of the total outstanding amount owed.

### VI. Professional Certification

At the discretion of the Department Director, the cost of professional certifications may be considered eligible reimbursable expenses or may be paid in advance of achieving the certification.

#### Service Requirement

- A. Employees must satisfy a service requirement commencing the award date of the certification.
  - i. If the certification cost(s) is less than \$1,000, employees must satisfy a one-year service requirement commencing the award date of the certification.
  - ii. If the certification cost(s) is \$1,000, or greater, employees must satisfy a two-year service requirement commencing the award date of the certification.
- B. If an employee fails to achieve the certification, they may be required to repay the City for expenses incurred or retest for the certification. If repayment is required, the employee will have 10 business days to make full repayment. If full repayment is not made within 10 business days, the outstanding amount due will be payroll deducted from the employees check. Payroll deductions will automatically commence the first pay period following the ten (10) day repayment period. Repayments made via payroll deduct may not exceed 26 pay periods and biweekly deduction amounts will not be less than 5% of the total outstanding amount owed.
- C. Employees are responsible for providing documentation upon successful completion of the certification within 30 days of receipt of official certification. Failure to provide required documentation will result in the employee being subject to repayment of expenses incurred by the City as stipulated in Section VI.B.
- D. Certifications/licenses required as a condition of continued employment are not subject to the conditions of this policy.

## VII. Tuition Reimbursement

- A. For tuition expenses to be eligible for tuition reimbursement, the college must be a regionally accredited university, college or school. If a question arises related to an institute's accreditation, the Human Resources Department will make a determination of eligibility with department feedback.
- B. Eligible employees may receive tuition reimbursement for eligible tuition expenses incurred related to the attainment of an Associate Degree, Bachelor's Degree and/or Master's Degree. Ineligible expenses are reflected in Section III, F.
- C. The City may reimburse tuition expenses up to a maximum of \$1,200 per employee, per semester/session (\$1,500 per semester/session for master's degree). The maximum annual reimbursement allowed per employee per calendar year is not to exceed \$2,400 (\$3,000 for master's degree).

The Department Director reserves the right to establish reimbursement limits (not to exceed limits specified by this policy) for their department and is not obligated to reimburse the allowable maximum under this policy.

- D. Employees are required to maintain satisfactory grade(s) of "C" or better for undergraduate courses and a "B" or better for graduate courses in order to be eligible for reimbursement.

If an employee drops the course(s) or does not receive a satisfactory grade as defined by this policy, the pre-approved request for reimbursement will not be eligible for reimbursement.

- E. Employees are responsible for providing documentation upon successful completion of courses to their Department Director within 30 days of the completion of the course(s) which reimbursement is requested. Proof of grades, detailed invoice and the completed pre-approved Request for Education Expense Reimbursement Form must be returned to be eligible for reimbursement.

Employees that fail to return all the required documentation by the designated deadline will not be eligible for reimbursement for that semester/session. The pre-approval will be null and void and the employee will not be eligible for reimbursement of that semester/session.

### Service Requirement

- F. Employees must satisfy a two-year service requirement commencing the date of reimbursement.

## VIII. Exceptions

Department Directors may institute department specific limitations and restrictions as deemed necessary. This includes, but is not limited to, establishing funding limits lower than the amounts established by this policy. In the event a departmental policy conflicts with the requirements of this policy, the City of Amarillo policy will be the governing policy. Education assistance is not an employee entitlement, but a management prerogative to enhance employee performance of official duties. The City Manager reserves the right to modify or override this policy at any time.

## Request for Education Assistance Form

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First

Employee ID #: \_\_\_\_\_ Hire Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Department #: \_\_\_\_\_ Department Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Initial next to the applicable request:

- \_\_\_\_\_ GED
- \_\_\_\_\_ Vocational Education/Certification
- \_\_\_\_\_ Professional Certification
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tuition Reimbursement ( \_\_\_\_ Undergraduate) ( \_\_\_\_ Graduate)

**Only complete this section if requesting assistance with GED or Professional Certification:**

Date of exam(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Amount being requested: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one:     Reimbursement Request             Advancement Request

**Only complete this section if requesting Tuition Reimbursement or Vocational Education/Certification:**

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Course(s) start date: \_\_\_\_\_

Course(s) end date: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Number	Course Title

Amount being requested: \_\_\_\_\_

### Education Assistance Payment Agreement

In consideration for participation in the City of Amarillo’s education assistance program, I agree to continue my employment with the City for the period stipulated by the Tuition Assistance Policy after receiving reimbursement or the City funding education expenses. In the event I drop the course or do not receive a “Pass” score, the funds paid in advance of completion of the course/exam/certification program/certification, I acknowledge I have ten (10) business days to reimburse the City for the full amount of the advancement. If full repayment is not made within ten (10) business days, the outstanding amount due will be automatically payroll deducted from my paycheck. Payroll deductions will automatically commence the first pay period following the ten (10) day repayment period. Repayments made via payroll deduct may not exceed 26 pay periods and biweekly deduction amounts will not be less than 5% of the outstanding amount owed.

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