

Organizational Policy

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Purpose

The City of Rochester is committed to supporting a culture of continuous learning and development by financially funding tuition, application fees and books required to pursue an employee’s individual educational goals. To help defray the costs of employee education, the City will pay 80 percent of tuition costs per year up to the annual maximum amounts listed in the chart below.

Type of Degree	Annual Maximum Benefit (prorated based on FTE)
Graduate	\$5,250
Undergraduate and Associate’s Degree	\$4,000
Other (Certifications or Coursework)	\$1,500

Nothing stated in this policy creates an employment contract between the City of Rochester and its employees.

Eligibility Criteria

All regular benefit-eligible employees who have successfully completed their initial probationary period and are in good performance standing are eligible for educational assistance for courses that commence after their date of hire. The educational assistance benefit for regular part-time employees will be based on full-time equivalency (FTE). The degree or certification sought must be applicable to the employee’s current position or a specific future role within the organization and be approved by Human Resources prior to the commencement of the course(s).

Course(s) must allow employees to earn credit(s) toward a degree from an accredited college or university, with the exception of certification coursework. College-level preparatory classes, intended solely to prepare the employee for a degree/certification program, will be covered by this program. Employees must receive at least a grade of “C” or “pass” to avoid repayment of educational assistance.

Procedure

Employees must submit the “Application for Educational Assistance” form prior to the course start date, along with a verified statement of eligible costs. Grants, scholarships or other funds received by the employee for educational benefits must be disclosed to the employer when applying for assistance. Coordination with these programs will occur so that the employee does not receive more than the actual cost of the tuition or other eligible educational expenses.

The City will provide payment 30 days after the application for educational assistance has been approved, but no earlier than 60 days before the start of class.

Time spent by employees in classes is not considered to be compensable time by the City.

Within 30 days of completing the course(s), the employee must provide proof of the grade earned (official grade report or transcript) to Human Resources.

If an employee fails to earn at least a grade of “C” or “pass,” they will be required to repay the City all funds paid for the course, including tuition, fees and books.

Termination Provisions

If an employee leaves employment within 12 months from the date the last course is completed, they will be required to repay all funds paid in the previous 12 months under this education assistance program. This timeframe may be extended by any unpaid, non-FMLA leave of absences taken during those 12 months.

If an employee is terminated from employment for performance or misconduct reasons, they will be required to repay the City for any funds paid for courses they are currently enrolled in, whether the class is completed or not. If an employee is laid off or if an employee’s job is eliminated for business reasons beyond the employee’s control, they will not be required to repay any educational assistance funds.

Tax Provisions

For tax purposes, this program is governed by the rules of the Internal Revenue Code. Certain payments may be subject to income taxes and are processed through the City’s payroll system. Any tax owed will remain the sole responsibility of the employee.

Policy revisions approved by City Administrator:



Alison Zelms

07/01/2024

Date

Policy History

Current Revision: 7/1/2024

Previous Revision(s): 9/21/2015

Associated Form(s)

- Educational Assistance Form

The forms associated with this policy can be found on RW - Human Resources – Forms