

Tuition Reimbursement Policy

PURPOSE

Grand Traverse County believes that education has a positive impact on an employee's contribution to the County and the employee's personal growth; we support educational efforts by providing reimbursements for continuing education courses.

POLICY & PROCEDURE

The County has established a tuition reimbursement program to help eligible employees improve job skills and enhance opportunities for advancement within the County. This program is open to eligible employees who wish to voluntarily pursue educational courses or training from an accredited college, university, or trade school for both credit and extended education courses. It does not apply to courses or trainings that are required by the employee's department or the County. The tuition reimbursement program is administered by the Human Resources department. This program is contingent upon the annual appropriation of funds for this purpose and is subject to change at any time.

Eligibility

- Regular full-time or part-time employees on a pro-rated basis.
- Employees on a leave (unless specifically approved for an educational leave) are not eligible for this benefit.
- Completion of a minimum of one year of employment as a regular status employee.

Course Requirements, Other Provisions

- Course must be from an accredited college, university, or trade school.
- Course must be for credit or extended education purposes. Audited classes are not eligible.
- Course must be directly related to the employee's current job or deemed to increase the employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities relative to potential advancement opportunities available within the County,

OR,

The course must be required to fulfill specific requirements for a degree program that the employee is currently enrolled in and the degree program is related to the employee's job or to a position available within the County.

- Courses must not interfere with the employee's job responsibilities and must be taken on the employee's own time.
- Under special circumstances a department head may authorize an employee to attend classes during normal working hours; however, it is the responsibility of both the individual employee and the department head to ensure that the employee makes up all lost time.

Process

During the budget preparation process, the employee should meet with his/her department head or designee to request consideration for tuition funding for the next budget year. Prior to registration, the employee is required to complete a Tuition Reimbursement Form and submit the form to Human Resources with course description(s) for individual classes. Alternatively, if enrolling in a degree program, the employee is required to submit an outline of all courses required (along with the corresponding descriptions) for advance approval of the degree program. Once the degree program is approved, the employee will follow the process for individual classes with the exception of providing course description(s) as the courses will be approved in advance.

After approval is obtained from Human Resources, the employee should register for the course(s) and submit the Tuition Reimbursement Form, proof of registration, and proof of payment to Human Resources within thirty (30) days from the date of registration. Within sixty (60) days of course completion, the employee is required to submit grade(s) to Human Resources for final review of eligible tuition reimbursement.

Appeal Process

If a request for tuition reimbursement is denied, the employee may file an appeal by submitting such a request in writing to the Human Resources Department within thirty (30) days of the denial. The appeal will be reviewed by an appeal panel consisting of a representative from Human Resources, a department head/manager, and a non-supervisory employee. The decision of the review panel shall be final.

Reimbursement

Approval of tuition reimbursement requests are contingent upon the availability of tuition reimbursement funds specifically budgeted for this purpose. Should funding become insufficient to meet reimbursement requests due to increased demand, budget cutbacks, or for any other reason, reimbursements will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Reimbursement eligibility is subject to the conditions, requirements, and processes, as explained in this policy.

- Reimbursement is limited to \$5,250 per calendar year, per employee.
- Upon enrollment: Reimbursement will be made on the basis of fifty (50%) percent of the tuition cost upon enrollment (not to include registration fees, books, lab fees, etc.)
- Upon completion: Reimbursement will be made on the basis of twenty-five (25%) percent of the tuition cost (not to include registration fees, books, lab fees, etc.) with a passing grade of C or better upon completion of the course. Documentation of the passing grade must be submitted to the Human Resources Department within sixty (60) days of completion of the course to be eligible for the twenty-five (25%) percent.
- Employees who receive tuition support or financial assistance from alternate sources must report such amount, and shall not be eligible to be reimbursed for any amount that they do not have to repay.

Repayment Obligation

- Employees who drop or fail a course will not be eligible for reimbursement and are required to reimburse the County for any tuition already received within thirty (30) days of the event.
- Employees who do not submit final grade(s) within sixty (60) days of completion of course(s) are required to reimburse the County for any tuition already received for that course.
- Employees who leave employment by their own initiative shall be required to reimburse the County according to the following schedule:
 - Within one year of completion of the course: 100%
 - Within 24 months of completion of the course: 75%

Within 36 months of completion of the course: 50%

Note: This policy may differ for those employees who are members of recognized unions, organizations, or associations. Any questions related to the content of this policy, or its interpretation, should be directed to Human Resources.

Approved Policy 4/92, Amended 8/93, 10/93, 12/95, 10/97, 3/98, 9/01, 08/09, 7/15, 7/2019