

EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

AUTHORITY: County of Orange Personnel and Salary Resolution Article VII, Sections 1-5 - [Personnel and Salary Resolution](#)
Orange County Auditor-Controller Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program Policy #0200-4, June 11, 2021
Memoranda of Understanding - [MOU](#)
Auditor-Controller Claims and Disbursing Bulletin, Issue 2022-04, dated 12/12/2022

RESCINDS: Procedure Manual Item 1-2-107, dated 04/28/22

FORMS: [Educational and Professional Reimbursement Request Form](#)
[Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program Claim form](#)

PURPOSE: Employees are eligible for Education and Professional Reimbursement through the County's Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program. The following explains the requirements to participate in the program, as well as the process for requesting/claiming educational and professional reimbursement for a variety of opportunities taken by departmental staff.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Policy

1. It is the policy of the department to encourage personnel to continue relevant professional and academic training, **attendance at conferences, or engagement in professional association activities** through a variety of opportunities. **The County's Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program** pays a portion of the cost of programs that benefit both the County and the employee. To qualify for the program, one or more of the following criteria must be met:
 - a. Related to the work of the employee's position or occupation.
 - b. Prepares the employee to transition to an alternate County occupation.
 - c. Prepares the employee for advancement to position of greater responsibility in the County.
2. In addition, items eligible for reimbursement must have the reasonable potential for contributing to achieving County business objectives.

B. Eligibility

1. **The Department Head or designee shall determine whether any given course qualifies for reimbursement.**

2. All full time regular, part time regular, limited term, and probationary employees performing their jobs satisfactorily are eligible for reimbursement. Extra-help employees are not eligible. **(Personnel and Salary Resolution, Article III, Section 2).**
3. The following are eligible for reimbursement:
 - a. Courses related to obtaining a degree (AA, BA, BS, Masters, or Ph.D.).
 - b. Accredited certificate programs.
 - c. Vocational skills programs.
 - d. Courses related to obtaining or maintaining a business-related certification, licenses, or accreditation.
 - e. Courses related to preparing to take tests to obtain business-related certification, licenses, or accreditation.
 - f. Professional conferences, conventions, and seminars that are related to business objectives. **For more information, refer to PMI 1-2-005 (Staff Attendance at Outside Training, Conferences or Professional Association Activities).**
 - g. Fees related to obtaining and/or renewing a license, including special service driver's licenses.
 - h. Fees related to certifications or accreditations.
 - i. Fees related to taking professional examinations.
 - j. Professional association membership fees.
4. In general, any courses taken through the program must be taken on employee time. However, at the discretion of the Department Head, a course may be taken on County time when it specifically meets a business need and is not available during the employee's non-work hours.
5. Courses are not eligible for reimbursement if they:
 - a. Are taken to bring unsatisfactory performance up to an acceptable level.
 - b. Are taken to acquire skills or knowledge which the employee was deemed to have when appointed.
 - c. Duplicate available in-service training.
 - d. Duplicate training which the employee has already received.

C. Nature of Reimbursement

1. Reimbursement may be made for all required fees, registration, and other costs related directly to the approved educational or professional expense. This may include, but is not limited to books, class materials, lab fees, testing fees, parking, processing fees, etc.
2. **Loan obligations and loan interest incurred by employees for payment of courses shall not be reimbursed. If the student loan proceeds went directly to the school to pay for the eligible course, then, the employee will get reimbursed.**
3. Expenses for travel, meals, and lodging are not reimbursable; however, the Department Head may authorize payment for these items when it meets their business needs and is budgeted in their travel expense budget.
4. For degree programs, reimbursement shall be made to the employee upon completion of the course with a minimum final grade of C or equivalent in an undergraduate course, or B or equivalent in a graduate level course.
5. Reimbursement for non-graded courses shall be made upon completion of an approved course and proof of payment.
6. Any conference reimbursed under the Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program should be attended for the employee's professional development and on the employee's own time. If the department requires an employee to attend a conference, but does not pay for the costs "up front" and does pay the employee's hours, reimbursement may be requested via Mileage and Other Expenses claim form on **Section - [Online Mileage Claim form](#)** [Refer to PMI 1-5-210 (County Travel and Mileage and Other Expense Claiming Procedure)].
7. If an employee is receiving reimbursement from another source that covers a portion of the cost, the County will only pay the remaining amount, after other reimbursements are exhausted.
8. The maximum reimbursement limit is \$10,000 per fiscal year to the eligible employees of the following MOUs:
 - a. Administrative Management Unit (Adoption date – 06/21/2019)
 - b. Community Services Unit (Adoption date – 10/22/2019)
 - c. County General Unit (Adoption date – 10/22/2019)
 - d. Office Services Unit (Adoption date – 10/22/2019)
 - e. Supervising Management Unit (Adoption date – 10/22/2019)
 - f. Public Safety General Unit and Public Safety Supervisory Unit (Adoption date – 03/08/2022)

- g. **Reimbursement of Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program expenses shall be paid from the same fiscal year allocation when the coursework is completed or when the non-coursework such as parking fees, membership fees, test fees, etc. payment is made.**

II. PROCEDURE

A. Requesting Tuition Reimbursement

1. The employee requesting tuition reimbursement should obtain the Department request form on [REDACTED] **- Educational and Professional Reimbursement Request form - [EPRP Request Form](#)**. Employees should complete the form online, print it out, sign it, and submit it to their supervisor who, in turn, will fill out the supervisor's part. The form goes to the Division Director to fill out the Director's portion and submit the form to Executive Management (EM). After approval, EM sends the form to the Secretary to log and forwards to the **Training and Volunteer Services (TVS) Unit** Tuition Reimbursement Coordinator for processing.
2. The Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program Request must be submitted within thirty (30) days of the starting date of the class(es) to be considered for approval.
3. The Tuition Reimbursement Coordinator will return approved requests to the requestor via email along with an explanation of the reimbursement claim submission process upon course completion. The actual claim form with explanation how to complete is available on [REDACTED] **Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program - Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program Claim form - [EPRP Claim Form](#)**.
4. Employees should complete the form online, print it out, sign it, and submit it to their supervisor who, in turn, will fill out the supervisor's part. The form goes to the Division Director (**DD**) to fill out the **DD's** portion and submit the form to Executive Management (EM). After approval, EM sends the form to the **EM** secretary to log and forwards to the Tuition Reimbursement Coordinator for processing.
5. The Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program Request must be submitted within thirty (30) days of the starting date of the class(es) to be considered for approval.
6. Requests denied will be returned to the employee with an explanation for the action taken. Requests that have been denied may be appealed through the established chain of command.

B. Tuition Reimbursement Claim

1. Upon completion of an approved course or payment of fees (for approved membership, license, certification, or accreditation), the employee **will**

complete the online claim form on [REDACTED] **Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program – Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program Claim form - [EPRP Claim Form](#)**. The employee will then print it out and sign (e-signature is unacceptable). The employee should attach proof of payment and proof of completion (where applicable), then send the claim packet as soon as possible to the Tuition Reimbursement Coordinator. The Tuition Reimbursement Coordinator will log, initial, and file the original claim packet and forward, **via the chain of command**, the original face sheet with copy of the supporting documentation to EM for approval. The claim form will be signed by one of the department's authorized signers (the Chief or designee).

2. Claim forms and pertinent backup documentation (refer to guidelines listed under "References") must be submitted to the Department Head as soon as possible, **but within one (1) fiscal year of completion of the training. However, should a claim be submitted somewhere within middle of the current fiscal year, the employee has the remainder of that fiscal year, plus the entire subsequent fiscal year to submit the pertinent documentation supporting the claim.**

Claims and supporting documentation for educational and professional reimbursement submitted by the employee on or before June 30 will be credited toward the employee's annual allowance for the current fiscal year.

3. The employee shall furnish the required documentation to the Department Head in accordance with the requirements of the Auditor-Controller Compliance unit including:
 - a. Filling out the claim form in its entirety.
 - b. Having original signatures on the form – both employee and authorized signers.
 - c. Supply original documentation that shows the **employee's** name, school or provider's name, semester/year or dates of attendance, titles of opportunity taken, and invoice costs (of enrollment, registration, program, course, units, or membership fees – not payments on account).
4. Upon approval by the Department Head (or designee) and receipt of claim form, the Auditor-Controller shall issue a warrant to the employee for reimbursement.
5. Employees not completing courses previously approved for tuition reimbursement or terminating employment prior to completion shall notify the Tuition Reimbursement Coordinator immediately.

REFERENCES:

Procedures: 1-2-005 Staff Attendance at Outside Training Conferences or
Professional Association Activities
1-5-210 County Travel and Mileage and Other Expenses Claiming
Procedure

Guidelines: [Educational and Professional Reimbursement Program –
Department Backup Documentation Requirements
Guide to Completing Educational and Professional Reimbursement
Claim Form](#)

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APPROVED BY: