



POLICY TITLE: TUITION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM POLICY

Effective: December 1, 2022

Approved: May 23, 2023

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I. OVERVIEW

Cook County (“County”) values County employees and is invested in their professional and personal development. The County encourages a culture of continuous learning and is committed to providing employees opportunities to enhance their skillsets and increase the scientific, technical, professional, and management abilities of our employees to meet both the present and future employment needs of the County. To support employee development and to attract and retain employees with superior ability and potential for advancement, the County has established the following Tuition Reimbursement Program (“Program”).

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for the Tuition Reimbursement Program.

III. INTENT

This policy is intended to be interpreted consistent with and subject to applicable law. This policy is not intended to supersede or limit the County from enforcing programs or provisions in any applicable Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”). Should any provision in this policy conflict with a specific provision in the Personnel Rules, the provision(s) in this policy shall take precedence.

IV. SEVERABILITY


If any section or provision of this document should be held invalid by operation of law, none of the remainder shall be affected.

V. JURISDICTION

The Bureau of Human Resources (“BHR”) is authorized to develop and issue policies for the effective management of Cook County employees, pursuant to section 44-45 of the Cook County Code of Ordinances.

VI. AREAS AFFECTED

This policy applies to all County Agencies funded by the Cook County Board of Commissioners’ Annual Appropriation Bill and Budget Resolution.

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VII. NONDISCRIMINATION

Cook County prohibits the discriminatory application, implementation, or enforcement of any provision of this policy on the basis of race, color, sex, age, religion, disability, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, military discharge status, source of income, gender identity or housing status, or any other protected category established by law, statute, or ordinance.

VIII. DEFINITIONS


Academic Cycle: The period of the year during which students attend an educational institution that may be segmented by smaller periods, i.e. semester, quarter, trimester etc. or other accrediting body.

Accredited Institution: A school with accreditation from the accrediting body that is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation US Department of Education, or other accrediting body.

Agency: Offices of all elected officials, departments, institutions or agencies of the County, including but not limited to the offices and departments under the jurisdiction of the County Board President, the Board of Commissioners, Cook County Health and Hospitals System (excluding nurses), Cook County State’s Attorney, Cook County Sheriff, Cook County Public Defender, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Cook County Treasurer, Cook County Clerk, Cook County Assessor, Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Board of Review, the Office of the Independent Inspector General, the Cook County Land Bank Authority, and the Public Administrator.

Employee: Full-time employees, excluding seasonal employees and employees in a temporary status, that work a regular full-time schedule.

Supporting Documentation: Documentation provided by an accredited institution that shows the employee’s name, address, name of course, dates course is held, times, itemization of costs, brief description of the course and a program outline showing course requirement.

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IX. POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This Program is intended for tuition reimbursement for courses taken at accredited institutions in degree or certification programs for disciplines that are work related. Fees for books, entrance examinations, preparation courses for exams, supplies, or other incidental costs are not eligible expenses under this Program. Reimbursements may be granted until Program specific appropriated funds are exhausted. An employee shall receive no more than \$1,500 per fiscal year for tuition reimbursement.

A. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Any Employee who has successfully completed at least 12 months of service with the County is eligible to participate in this Program unless other terms are provided according to an applicable CBA.


Coursework must be a part of a degree or certificate program that will increase the Employee’s ability to perform their current job duties and/or prepare them to transition to another position within the County in the future. All coursework must be provided by an accredited institution. An accredited institution may include courses offered by a certified educational institution, technical institution, junior/community college, or university.

To the extent possible, courses should be scheduled during times that do not conflict with the Employee’s regular work schedule. However, if operationally feasible, work schedules may be adjusted to accommodate class schedules with prior approval of the Department Head or Bureau Chief.

B. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Participating Employee

Employees who participate in this Program are expected to comply with the provisions contained herein, failure to do so may jeopardize tuition reimbursement eligibility and/or disbursement. Participation in this Program is voluntary and an investment in professional development. It is an opportunity for Employees to expand their skills in furthering their job and career with the County. Participation does not guarantee career advancement or promotion.

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Prior to the start of coursework, the Employee is responsible for the following:

- Submitting the Employee executed Tuition Reimbursement Form to BHR to enroll in the Program.
- Disclosing their participation in this Program on any applicable forms or documentation, including tax statements.

Upon the conclusion of coursework, the Employee is responsible for the following:

- Requesting reimbursement within 90 days of course completion.
- Providing proof of receiving a passing grade (C or better or pass for pass/fail coursework).
- Notifying BHR in the event of withdrawing from the course, receiving a non-passing grade, or loss of academic standing

If an Employee is approved for reimbursement but withdraws from or does not complete the course, the Employee will not receive a reimbursement. If an Employee is approved for reimbursement for less than \$1,500 during one Academic Cycle, the Employee may apply again during the next Academic Cycle even if it occurs within the same fiscal year; however, an Employee’s total reimbursement for the fiscal year shall not exceed \$1,500.

2. APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Eligible participants must submit their Employee Tuition Reimbursement Form prior to the start of coursework. BHR will review the Tuition Reimbursement Form to determine if the coursework is eligible for reimbursement.

The following types of coursework are not eligible for reimbursement through the Program:

- Coursework focused on recreation or leisure time such as golf, bridge, sewing, and dancing are not covered, unless they are part of a degree or certificate program as stated above.
- Preparation courses to prepare for an exam that is required to attend graduate school, including GMAT/GRE/LSAT test-prep courses.



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3. REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

After completing the Tuition Reimbursement Form (Exhibit A) Employees who are deemed eligible under the provisions of this Program will receive a 29A form from the BHR. The participating Employee must return the 29A form to BHR upon the successful completion of the approved course/s with a grade of "C" or better, or proof of successful completion of non-college class work. The Employee shall send the following documents to BHR:

- 1) Official receipt of tuition payment from the accredited institution.
- 2) Official final grade report or certificate of completion, whichever applies.

BHR will complete the 29A form using the information on the documents the Employee provided. BHR will forward the completed 29A form to the Employee for their review and signature. The Employee shall send the signed 29A form back to BHR for processing.

- 3) The signed 29A form. The Employee's signature shall be placed on the lower left line marked Vendors Signature.

Reimbursement typically occurs 60 days after the complete submission of all supporting documentation.

X. CONFIDENTIALITY

Cook County maintains confidentiality of information, to the extent required by applicable law.

COOK COUNTY BUREAU OF HUMAN RESOURCES
 TRAINING AND EDUCATION
 Application for Course Approval/Tuition Reimbursement

Union affiliation & local number (if applicable) _____ Employee # _____

Part-time employee Full time employee

Employee Name _____ XXX- XX- _____
(Last four digits only)

Job Title _____ Dept. # _____ Dept. Name _____

Work Address _____ Contact Number _____

I hereby apply for approval of the course/s indicated below and subsequent tuition reimbursement under the provisions of the Cook County Reimbursement Plan. I have read and understand the policy and agree to comply therewith. Any attempt to falsify information will result in forfeiture of Cook County training benefits and/or disciplinary action.

Date _____ Employee Signature _____

Name of School _____ Phone # _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Name of course/s	Course #	Start Date	End Date	Credit Hours	Tuition Cost

Reason for taking the course/s: _____

EMPLOYEE DEPARTMENT HEAD APPROVAL

I approve the above listed course/program as a job-related subject that should qualify for Tuition Reimbursement.

DATE _____ Telephone # _____

DEPARTMENT HEAD _____
(Signature)

(Printed)

BUREAU OF HUMAN RESOURCES APPROVAL

Date _____ Verified by: _____

APPROVED

DENIED

Signature Approval: _____

Forward completed application to the Bureau of Human Resources email inbox at bhr.tuition@cookcountyil.gov or submit in-person at the County Building, 118 N. Clark Street, Room 834, Chicago IL, 60602

(Revised November 2023)