



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County of Linn, Iowa

Training Assistance and Tuition Reimbursement Program Policy			Directive Number:
Approval Date: 07/01/2011	Effective Date: 07/01/2014	Revision No: 5	Policy Section & Number: PM-013
Reference: BOS Minutes: 07/01/2014; 07/01/2011; BOS Minutes: 07/01/2009; 06/25/2007 BOS Minutes: 05/19/1997 Initially Adopted: 07/01/1997		Distribution: Elected Officials, Department Heads, County Employee Handbook, Intranet	

Training Assistance

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide: 1) County/departmental required training; 2) conferences or seminars specifically related to County work and designed to meet the needs and interest of employees and 3) funding for college courses including courses toward a degree program in a discipline related to County employment through the Tuition Reimbursement Program. It is the policy of the Linn County Board of Supervisors to provide tuition assistance, on-the-job training and long-range employee development for eligible regularly scheduled full time and part-time Linn County employees subject to the availability of funds. The Board of Supervisors encourages employees to take advantage of educational opportunities through courses, programs, or degree studies that relate to present or future County job responsibilities or assignments.

Scope

This policy is applicable to eligible regularly scheduled full-time and part-time Linn County employees responsible to the Board of Supervisors; employees responsible to an Elected Official, including the Elected Official and their deputies; and the Public Health and Conservation Departments. Temporary, seasonal or on-call employees are excluded from this policy.

Whenever the provisions of this policy are in conflict with the *Code of Iowa* or with a Linn County labor agreement, the provisions of the *Code of Iowa* or the labor agreement will prevail.

Specific Policy Provisions

1. County/departmental required training includes all interdepartmental classes, such as First Aid and CPR training from the Risk Management Department. It also includes intradepartmental training designed for a certain occupation such as self-defense training for all Deputy Sheriffs. This training is paid from departmental budgets.
2. Conferences, seminars or course work authorized for attendance by the Department Head are educational opportunities which are directly related to the employee's current position or required by the department. This training is paid from departmental budgets provided money is available. Such conferences or seminars may allow employees

to receive necessary continuing education units (CEUs) or vocational certificates. Employees are allowed to attend on County time if held during the regular work day of the employee subject to supervisory approval.

3. The Tuition Reimbursement Program and the required forms are set forth below. The funding for the Tuition Reimbursement Program comes from the Linn County Employee Development budget.

Tuition Reimbursement Program

Purpose

Financial assistance is available to eligible employees of Linn County to aid in their growth and development subject to available funding. We believe this will result in long-term improved service to our customers. Employees are encouraged to take advantage of education opportunities through college courses, programs, or degree studies that reasonably relate to current job responsibilities or future County assignments.

Important Features

College coursework must be compatible with the employee's current job or preparation for a higher position to which he/she could reasonably expect to be promoted. A percentage of tuition will be reimbursed for approved courses completed at an accredited educational institution. The maximum allowable reimbursement per semester is \$500. There are three semesters for which requests for courses may be submitted – fall, spring and summer. The maximum allowable tuition reimbursement for any one employee per fiscal year is \$1,500. The reimbursement rate will be applied per the following schedule up to a \$500 maximum:

- A = 100% tuition assistance
- B = 75% tuition assistance
- C = 50% tuition assistance
- Pass/Fail = 50% tuition assistance

If an employee is able to receive reimbursement for more than one class because the cost of one class is less than \$500, the applicable reimbursement amount per class will be determined by Human Resources staff based on the grade received and the remaining allowable reimbursement up to the \$500 maximum.

Eligibility

1. **Employee must have completed probation prior to an application for participation and must also be an employee at the time the college course is completed to qualify for payment.** Employee must be regularly scheduled for twenty (20) hours or more per week. If part-time employees are approved, the reimbursement will be pro-rated based on the number of hours scheduled to work. Temporary or on-call employees are not eligible. College coursework must be pursued at an accredited educational institution such as Coe College, Mt. Mercy University, Kirkwood Community College, Cornell College, the University of Iowa, Kaplan University, Upper Iowa University, etc. Courses such as Dale Carnegie, Toastmasters or courses which grant continuing education credits (CEUs) are not included under this program.

2. College coursework must be scheduled outside of normal working hours. Exceptions must be approved in advance by employee's Department Head. Approved vacation leave or flexible time, for example, may be approved by the Department Head.
3. A *Linn County Tuition Reimbursement Course Request* form must be completed and submitted to the Employee Development Committee. The employee will be notified as soon as possible of approval or disapproval. The committee does not always meet monthly, so allow extra time for the review process. Forms are available in the Employee Handbook and on the Intranet.
4. An employee can apply to receive education assistance to pursue a college degree program. A *Linn County Tuition Reimbursement Request to Pursue Degree Program* form must be completed prior to the submission of a *Tuition Reimbursement Course Request* form if an employee wishes to receive education assistance to pursue a college degree program. Approval for a college degree means courses will be approved that are directly or not directly related to the employee's current position but are required to complete the degree. If a degree program does not apply, college courses can be approved on a course-by-course basis. In determining such approval, the Committee shall consider the criteria set forth in this policy.
5. Preference will be given to individual course requests and undergraduate degree programs. If funds are available, approval of graduate degree programs will also be considered by the Committee. A portion of the annual allotted tuition reimbursement funds will be reserved for courses beginning July – December and another portion for courses beginning January – June each year. Request forms for courses taken July – December should be submitted by June 1st of each year and courses taken January – June should be submitted by December 1st of each year. Request forms for courses taken during the summer should be submitted by May 1st of each year. If the employee is taking an online course or a course that is part of an accelerated program that does not follow a typical semester schedule, request forms should be submitted at least eight (8) weeks in advance of the course start date. Such courses will be subject to a maximum allowable reimbursement of \$500 per course and \$1,500 per fiscal year per employee. If an employee is unable to meet the deadlines stated in this policy, please contact the Human Resources Department at 892.5120 as soon as possible.
6. Upon completion of the course, the employee must submit an itemized tuition receipt and a grade report to the Human Resources Department. A grade of "C" or better must be attained to receive reimbursement. For pass/fail courses, a "passing" grade must be received. In the event a letter grade is not given, evidence of satisfactory completion in the form of a certificate or diploma must accompany the receipt. **Request for reimbursement must be submitted within fifteen (15) days of grade report receipt.** Itemized receipts and grades for tuition reimbursement must be received by December 1st for the July – December period; by June 1st for the January – June period and by September 1st for the summer period. If the course end date falls after the December 1st or June 1st deadlines, the employee will need to notify the Human Resources Department with an expected date for claim submission as well as an estimate of the amount to be covered.

7. Reimbursement will be reduced by the amount of any government, college, or other program grants, scholarships, fellowships, etc., that the employee receives (excluding student loans). Employees are prohibited from receiving reimbursement from more than one source for the same course.
8. IRS regulations currently require that tuition reimbursement programs be considered non-taxable income. This regulation is subject to change, and the County will apply the appropriate IRS regulations in effect at the time of reimbursement.
9. If the employee leaves County employment, he/she is required to reimburse the County for payments received in the previous twelve (12) month period unless termination is for reasons of disability, death, retirement or layoff. The twelve (12) month period begins at the completion of the course. **Further, employee agrees such reimbursement will be deducted from the last paycheck from the County unless other arrangements are made with the Payroll Department in the Auditor's Office.**
10. Reimbursement for approved expenses of the Tuition Reimbursement Program are paid from the Employee Development Committee's designated education funds. **Therefore, the availability of dollars may affect whether or not a course is approved for reimbursement.**

Questions about the Training Assistance and Tuition Reimbursement Program should be directed to the Human Resources Department at 892-5120.