



ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINE 16 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Prepared By:

Human Resources

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16.1 PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for employee participation in the LOTT Clean Water Alliance's (LOTT's) educational assistance program.

16.2 REFERENCE: None**16.3 APPLICATION**

This policy applies to all regular employees who have completed their initial probationary/evaluation period. Reimbursement for part-time employees will be prorated based on the budgeted FTE authorization as shown in the budget complement.

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Employees receiving educational incentive pay under other agreements are not eligible for this program.

16.4 **POLICY**

Educational opportunities which increase the ability of employees to effectively perform their work and prepare them to take on greater responsibility within LOTT service benefit both the employee and LOTT. LOTT encourages employees to seek additional educational opportunities on their own initiative by reimbursing them for tuition expenses.

16.5 **GUIDELINES**

16.5.1 **Funding:** The ability to offer educational assistance is subject to availability of funds.

16.5.2 **Job Performance:** Division directors may deny an employee the opportunity to participate in this program based on documented job performance deficiencies.

16.5.3 **Required Training:** Courses required by a division or section, which are taken for the sole purpose of updating and/or maintaining skills required by the employee's current job, will not be reimbursed by this program but may be reimbursed or paid for in advance through division or section training programs.

16.5.4 **Course Requirements:** Reimbursement will be made only for courses which may reasonably be applied toward the completion of a degree or certification program and taken at an accredited college, university, or vocational education institution.

16.5.5 **Funding Priorities:** The course, or the degree program to which the course would reasonably be applied, must be related to the employee's current position or a reasonable career opportunity within LOTT. If limited funds are available, preference will be given first to courses directly related to the employee's current job. Second, to courses applicable to a degree program directly related to the employee's current employment. Third, to courses related to career opportunities reasonably available to the employee within LOTT.

6.5.6 **Tuition Only:** Educational assistance is for tuition reimbursement only. No reimbursement will be allowed for books, lab fees, travel expenses, material costs, other fees or charges levied by the college or university as a condition of enrollment, or other expenses.

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16.5.7 **Degree Programs/Long-Term Educational Plans:** Employees who plan to obtain a degree or otherwise desire tuition reimbursement for multiple courses, quarters, and/or semesters will be encouraged to utilize the Career Development Program to access funding for their long-term educational goals.

16.5.8 **Reimbursement Limitations:** LOTT reserves the right to establish an individual maximum annual reimbursement amount based on the availability of funding and other considerations. Employees are encouraged to select educational opportunities at the least possible expense. Accordingly, LOTT will pay tuition costs for courses at State of Washington supported educational institutions.

Tuition at more expensive private or out-of-state institutions may also be covered, however the maximum reimbursement amount per credit hour for courses at such institutions shall be the average of the per credit charge for an in-state, part-time student (1 to 10 credits) at the following institutions: South Puget Sound Community College, The Evergreen State College, and the University of Washington (Tacoma branch). This amount will be determined on August 1st of each year by Human Resources. The maximum reimbursement per semester credit hour shall be the maximum per quarter credit amount multiplied by a factor of 1.5. Employees may request tuition assistance exceeding the per credit limit by attaching to their *Educational Assistance Pre-Approval* form (Appendix A) an additional written request that details justification for the increased reimbursement amount, which the Executive Director will consider and may authorize at his discretion.

16.5.9 **Approval Criteria:** Approval of reimbursements will be made on the basis of date of request, compliance with the above criteria, and division director approval.

16.5.10 **Requests Without Prior Approval:** Requests for reimbursement which have not been submitted and approved in advance will be considered on a first come, first served basis according to the priorities established in 16.5.5, after all prior commitments have been met.

16.5.11 **Completion Requirements:** The employee must successfully complete the course obtaining a "C" grade or better, or a "Pass" in a Pass/Fail system, or as required to retain status in the program if a higher standard is imposed by the school. (For educational institutions that do not offer the option of grades, alternative arrangements to gauge successful completion must be agreed upon by the division director, Human Resources, and the employee prior to the beginning of the school period.)

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- 16.5.12 **Time Off:** Courses which are offered only during and employee's regular work hours may be approved by the division director, provided time off can be arranged conveniently, reasonable arrangements can be made to make up time off, and/or leave without pay, compensatory time off, and/or vacation is granted.
- 16.5.13 **Non-compensable Hours:** Hours spent in courses reimbursable by this program are not considered compensable hours.
- 16.5.14 **Pyramiding Prohibition:** Tuition expenses will not be reimbursed if the employee is receiving tuition reimbursement or educational incentive from any other source.
- 16.5.15 **Procedures:**
- A. Notification:** Human Resources will notify all eligible employees of the availability of the program annually. Notification will include any annual individual maximum and the credit hour rate for private or out-of-state institution reimbursement.
 - B. Application:** Employees must complete the *Educational Assistance Pre-Approval* form (Appendix A) and submit it to Human Resources prior to course registration. Human Resources will review and approve those requests which meet the above criteria. Approved requests will obligate the specified amount for reimbursement at the end of the school period. If the requested class(es) is/are not approved, the employee and his/her supervisor will be notified immediately.
 - C. Notification of Insufficient Funds:** In the event funds are limited during any part of the year, Human Resources will notify employees of this fact in sufficient time to make alternate funding arrangements or postpone classes.
 - D. Reimbursement Processing (REVISED FEBRUARY 2011):** Upon successful completion of the course, the employee must submit a completed *Tuition Reimbursement Request* form (Appendix B) within 60 days of completion of the course, along with the following documentation: grade report reflecting successful completion of the course as defined in 16.5.10; receipt for payment of the course; and other documentation which may be required by Human Resources. **In certain instances, educational assistance may be considered a taxable fringe benefit by the Internal Revenue Service. Employees will be taxed according to applicable IRS requirements.**

APPENDIX A



EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PRE-APPROVAL					
<p>Instructions: To apply for educational assistance in accordance with Administrative Guideline 16, complete this form and obtain supervisor/division director approval. Requests must be approved prior to registration for courses to ensure availability of funds. Contact Human Resources at 528-5715 for funding availability and maximum reimbursement limits. If you are requesting approval to exceed the per credit maximum allowance, attach a separate written request for the Executive Director's consideration that justifies the higher expense.</p>					
Name:		Division/Section:			
Position:		Employee Phone:			
Supervisor:		Supervisor Phone:			
List the classes that you plan to attend. Following the course dates, please note whether the courses are offered on a semester or quarterly basis.					
School	Course Title	Course Dates	Q/S	Credits	Tuition
Total Educational Assistance Requested:					
Employee Signature:				Date:	
Supervisor/Director Approval					
Supervisor Signature:				Date:	
Division Director Signature:				Date:	
Human Resources Review/Approval					
Q or S Max: \$	Cost/credit: \$	Executive Director Approval Required? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Human Resources Approval/Date:	
Executive Director Approval				Date:	

Forward completed form to Human Resources for processing.



APPENDIX B

TUITION REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST					
<p>Instructions: Tuition Reimbursement for completion of a previously approved Educational Assistance Request is granted in accordance with Administrative Guideline 16, Educational Assistance. Complete this form, obtain supervisor/director approval, and attach the required documentation (receipt for tuition payment and grade report or transcript).</p>					
Name:			Division/Section:		
Position:			Phone:		
Supervisor:			Supervisor Phone:		
Please list the classes for which you are requesting reimbursement:					
School	Course Title	Course Dates	Credits	Final Grade	Tuition
Total Reimbursement Requested:					
Employee Signature:				Date:	
REIMBURSEMENT APPROVAL					
Supervisor Signature:				Date:	
Division Director Signature:				Date:	
<p>Human Resources Review</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Receipt for paid tuition <input type="checkbox"/> "C" or better grade				<p><input type="checkbox"/> If requests exceeds per credit maximum rate (\$ _____), attach prior approval with Executive Director authorization.</p>	
				HR Signature	
				Date:	

Forward completed form to Human Resources for processing.