708 - TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

I. GENERAL

Tuition reimbursement is intended to encourage employee development and improve work-related knowledge, skills, and abilities through the pursuit of educational programs leading to a college degree or industry-related certification or licensure that enhances City operations and is not otherwise paid by the City. Tuition reimbursement is a benefit for active full-time employees that is limited to available funds. The City strongly encourages employees to further their education; however, continuing education does not guarantee promotion or transfer.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Accredited Institution – Colleges, universities or vocational programs that are nationally accredited by the U.S. Department of Education or the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

B. Educational Assistance – Financial aid received from other sources, including but not limited to: non-City government agencies, organizations, businesses, or associations that award scholarships, internships, grants; and/or veterans’ benefits (e.g., G. I. Bill).

C. Performance Standards – Employees must be meeting established performance standards for their position, as acknowledged by their department director.

D. Reimbursable Expenses – Only tuition related costs paid to an educational institution or certified professional organization, approved at the time of request. Textbooks, learning aids and materials, university fees, lab fees, technology fees, parking or activity fees are not reimbursable.

E. Certified Professional Organization – a national or international organization or association whose purpose is to advance a specific profession, support and educate the individuals employed in that profession, and serve the public good. For purposes of this policy, the organization or association must confer certifications or licenses through an examination process that is validated by a state agency or governing body of professionals.

III. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

A. Degree Programs – Employees who have successfully completed their probationary period and are currently meeting performance standards are eligible to apply for tuition reimbursement when pursuing a degree, or are taking individual courses through an approved and accredited educational institutions, provided the course of study is related to the employee’s current position or a reasonable promotional objective within the City. Employees are eligible for a maximum of twelve (12) semester hours, or quarter hour equivalent, reimbursement per fiscal year.
B. Apprenticeship Program - Employees who are currently meeting performance standards are eligible to apply for reimbursement of technical instruction paid to an accredited institution when the instruction fulfills educational requirements toward the completion of an approved City Apprenticeship.

C. Technical and Vocational Training - Employees in a vocational or trades occupation who have completed their probationary period and are currently meeting performance standards, are eligible to apply for tuition reimbursement for job-related technical instruction paid to an accredited institution.

Sworn Fire employees who voluntarily take and pass continuing education classes required to obtain Paramedic certification immediately following completion of the Advanced Emergency Medical Technician training provided by the City may request tuition reimbursement for the Paramedic course instruction upon completion of the employee’s probationary period. Reimbursement is subject to sustained satisfactory performance by the employee.

D. Employees who have completed their probationary period and are pursuing instruction through a certified professional organization in preparation for obtaining a job-related certification or license that is required or preferred for advancement in their department, and is not otherwise paid for by the City, are eligible to apply for reimbursement of the instruction.

In all circumstances, City reimbursement will not include amounts paid to the employee, accredited institution or certified professional organization through educational assistance otherwise awarded to the employee. Any exceptions to eligibility must be approved by the City Manager.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Human Resources administers the tuition reimbursement program and is responsible for ensuring that requests and approvals for reimbursement are in compliance with policy.

B. Department directors are responsible for approving tuition reimbursement applications, ensuring that submitted courses are relevant to the employee’s position or a reasonable promotional objective, and determining that the courses will not interfere with the operations of the department.

C. Employees are responsible for initiating the tuition reimbursement process and complying with all terms as stated in this policy and the tuition agreement form. Failure to do so may result in non-payment by the City or forfeiture of the tuition reimbursement benefits. Employees should contact Human Resources for application guidelines and instructions to submit an application.
Employees are required to disclose on the application any and all information relating to educational assistance received from any other source. Failure to disclose other educational assistance may result in the employee being ineligible for any tuition reimbursement.

V. **REIMBURSEMENT**

Tuition costs will be paid initially by the employee. To receive reimbursement for an approved course, the employee must provide tuition receipts and evidence of the grade(s) received to Human Resources within thirty (30) days of the completion of the course(s), or immediately upon receipt if received from the accredited institution or certified professional organization more than thirty (30) calendar days following completion of a course:

A. Official transcripts may be requested by Human Resources for confirmation.

B. Any fees associated with obtaining a transcript must be paid by the employee.

Employees must attain the grade of “C” or better for reimbursement for undergraduate work and the grade of “B” or better for graduate level courses. Courses taken on a pass/fail basis will be reimbursed only if the employee receives a passing designation.

Employees pursuing a degree, or who complete continuing education classes at an accredited institution, and successfully complete the above stated requirements will be reimbursed for tuition at the following rate, not to exceed the total cost of the course(s):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergraduate Level Course</th>
<th>$150 per credit hour/maximum 12 credits per FY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Level Course</td>
<td>$250 per credit hour/maximum 12 credits per FY</td>
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Employees may receive a total of $1,800 per year in tuition reimbursement for any combination of approved education, unless the employee is in a graduate level degree program. Employees in a graduate level degree program may receive a total of $3,000 per year for any combination of approved education.

Employees who resign from employment or are terminated by the City for any reason other than a Reduction in Force (RIF) within one year of receiving tuition reimbursement will be required to make a repayment to the City. Repayment will include all tuition reimbursement funds paid to the employee in the twelve-month period prior to their termination date. Repayments will be deducted from the employee’s available paid personal leave (PPL) balance and/or the final paycheck (after payment of the federal minimum wage). If there are insufficient hours to cover the cost of the repayment, employees will be required to set up a payment plan with the Department of Finance. Payment in full must be made no later than six (6) months following the employee’s last day of employment. In addition, employees who leave the City’s employment prior to receiving payment for requested tuition will forfeit payment of the requested funds.
Reimbursements are subject to the availability of funds and reimbursement shall be pre-approved on a first come, first served basis. Tuition reimbursement is not guaranteed and the City reserves the right to reduce the amount of tuition reimbursement provided or to discontinue this program at any time.

Supersedes/Amends: 708, 01/01/2018

Approved:

[Signature]
City Manager

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