



# CITY OF RIO RANCHO

## ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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### **Education Expense Reimbursement and Educational Leave for Employees**

Chapter:	5
Article:	6
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#### **5-6-1 Title: Educational Expense Reimbursement and Educational Leave for Employees**

#### **5-6-2 Purpose and Scope**

It is the intent of the City of Rio Rancho to provide employees with the on-going opportunity to receive the education needed to facilitate the development of knowledge, skills and abilities related to job duties and growth within the organization. The central premise of this policy is to enhance the personal and professional development of City employees.

#### **5-6-3 Policy**

All education from an accredited institution of higher learning will be administered in a manner consistent with the City of Rio Rancho's Administrative Policies and Equal Employment Policy, which affords equal opportunity for all persons regardless of race, age, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, sex and physical or mental handicap or medical condition.

#### **5-6-4 Tuition Reimbursement**

Tuition reimbursement is the repayment of tuition, enrollment fees, course fees, and books, in that order, at an accredited institution of higher learning. An institution of higher education is an institution accredited to grant post-secondary degrees from a recognized accrediting body.

Eligibility: To be eligible for tuition reimbursement, an employee must have attained regular status (successfully completed probationary period); and have completed and returned to Human Resources a Tuition Reimbursement Acknowledgment Form and Tuition Reimbursement Application. The Tuition Reimbursement Acknowledgment Form substantiates the criteria under which funding will be made available. Definitions of the criteria are:

Job or career-related: Degrees directly related to work currently performed by the employee, and/ or within the scope of logical progression within the employee's current career path with the City of Rio Rancho.

Required academic classes: Courses required for a specified degree.

Required for upward mobility: Degrees that enhance employee eligibility for promotion in the City of Rio Rancho.

Career Enhancement: Degrees that assist the employee in current job related duties.

### **5-6-5 Funding**

Funding will be available for employees to pursue career-related courses, required academic classes toward an approved degree major, and for courses required for upward mobility and career enhancement studies.

1. The Human Resources Department, in conjunction with the Financial Services Department, has the responsibility of maintaining an ongoing record of available funds and determining the most cost effective method of acquiring the requested course(s).
2. The City will reimburse employees for approved courses at a rate not to exceed the current credit hour tuition rate at the University of New Mexico. The City's reimbursement to the employee shall be calculated and then reduced by any other grant, scholarship, or other subsidy from any source, which may by its own terms be used for tuition.

### **5-6-6 Employee Responsibilities**

1. Documentation of course completion shall be provided to the Human Resources Department within one week of receipt of the grade. Upon receipt, it will be placed in the employee's personnel file. Acceptable documentation includes a copy of the official grade report or an official transcript, and the course(s) for which tuition reimbursement was granted, along with receipt of payment.
2. Employees receiving tuition reimbursement are required to continue working for the City upon completion of their most recent course(s) for a period of at least one year. If an employee leaves the City prior to one year following completion of their last course(s),

the employee shall fully reimburse the City for the course(s). In the case of involuntary termination, the employee will not be required to reimburse the City.

3. Employees receiving tuition reimbursement are required to submit all information on grants, scholarships, GI Bill and other subsidies received. It is the employee's responsibility when applying for subsidies to provide documentation specifying what the funds are to pay for (i.e., tuition 50%, books 50%, etc.). If the City does not receive any documentation on such subsidies, the City shall presume that the subsidy is intended for tuition. In the event any subsidies are not reported, the employee will be disqualified from future tuition reimbursement and all prior amounts received must be repaid in full to the City. The City reserves the right to perform payroll deduction, if necessary.

4. Reimbursement will only be paid for earned grades of "C" or above. Passing grades in "Pass/Fail" courses will also qualify for reimbursement.

### **5-6-7 Educational Leave**

With the approval of an applicant's immediate supervisor and department director, flextime, comp time, or vacation time may be allowed for class attendance for courses scheduled during normal working hours.

1. In all cases, the applicant's supervisor and department director will be consulted prior to the requested leave regarding how much educational leave will be granted.

2. In consultation with Human Resources, a supervisor and/or department director may choose to deny leave for such purposes.

A. When leave is denied, written notice will be provided to the employee and a copy will be forwarded to Human Resources.

B. Educational leave shall be used only for actual class attendance, and for travel time to and from the institution.

C. If leave is approved, the direct supervisor, department director and employee must complete the appropriate leave form and return it to Human Resources.

### **5-6-8 Application Process**

1. The employee must complete the application process prior to course enrollment.

2. Upon completion of a Tuition Reimbursement Acknowledgment Form, applications for tuition reimbursement can be obtained from Human Resources.

3. The employee will complete the Tuition Reimbursement Application Form and obtain approval from his or her supervisor and department director.

4. The employee shall submit the completed application to Human Resources.

5. Human Resources will review applications with respect to the employee tuition reimbursement guidelines.

6. Human Resources will notify the employee of their status within ten (10) working days.

#### **5-6-9 Reimbursement Procedure**

1. The employee is solely responsible for payment of all tuition and related expenses.
2. Documentation of course completion must be provided to the Payroll Supervisor in Financial Services within one week of receipt of the course grade(s).
3. Upon receipt of the adequate course grade(s) and proof of payment, Finance may reimburse the employee. Reimbursement payments are issued in the last pay period of each fiscal year.
4. The City reserves the right to deny all or partial funding based on financial reimbursement received by an employee.

#### **5-6-10 Reimbursement Subject to Funding Availability**

All tuition reimbursements are subject to funding availability. The City may fund all or a portion of the tuition depending on available budget and demand for reimbursable funds. In the event that there is not adequate budget to fund all eligible applications, the City will pro-rate the payments based on a proportion of the total eligible expenses.

#### **5-6-11 Taxability of Benefit**

Reimbursements may be considered taxable income based on the Internal Revenue Code. If taxable, benefits taxes will be withheld at the rate dictated by each individual employee's W-4 form in effect at the time the reimbursement is made, and reported on the employee's W-2 form.

APPROVED THIS 25th DAY OF MARCH, 2021

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Peter Wells, Acting City Manager