

Effective Date: July 01, 2019

TUITION ASSISTANCE POLICY (Revised)

9.23 Purpose

The City has a Tuition Assistance Program that provides financial assistance to employees who take job-related, City career-enhancing credit courses at accredited, degree-granting schools and institutions.

The program promotes the City's goals for service delivery improvements and workforce investment by encouraging employees to increase effectiveness in their job performance as well as to prepare for potential advancement within the City.

The program is not intended to provide assistance for staff development training or to replace department-specific training. It is also not intended to replace costs currently covered by department budgets such as license renewals.

While the City supports lifelong learning, education and/or degree attainment, there is no guarantee of promotion or transfer for employees who acquire additional education.

A. Definitions

1. "Accredited Institution" means a college or university accredited by an accrediting agency or state agency nationally recognized by the Secretary of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. A listing of nationally-recognized accrediting agencies is found at www.ed.gov.
2. "Term" means a full semester, trimester, or quarter. If a school offers classes in sessions or segments within the term, classes taken in sessions or segments will count toward the maximum allowed per term.
3. "Tuition Assistance Form" means the application needed for approval or disapproval of tuition assistance.

B. Eligibility

To be eligible for tuition reimbursement under this policy an employee must

- Be a full-time employee
- Have completed one year of service
- Be on the payroll when the course is completed
- Must meet the performance expectations of his or her current position
- Must not have any formal disciplinary action within the previous 18 months. Formal disciplinary actions include written reprimands, demotions, or suspension
- Must ensure the educational institution is from the approved list of accredited schools as described in Section A.1
- Must apply for and be pre-approved before enrolling in courses or any other type of formal education such as professional certifications.

C. General Provisions

1. During each fiscal year, the amount to be awarded to all eligible applicants will be contingent on funds that are appropriated toward this program. The City of Gallup is allowed the discretion to limit tuition assistance to employees during the fiscal year for budgetary considerations. In the event of budgetary limitations, priority will be given to applicants closest to completing their degree requirements. All other applicants be considered on a first come, first serve basis.
2. Course work must meet requirements for an associate, bachelor, or master's degree or job-related certificate program.
3. Tuition assistance is limited to the costs of tuition for a maximum of two courses per school term, not exceeding seven (7) semester credit hours or ten (10) quarter credit hours.
4. Reimbursement may be provided for laboratory fees, online course fees, textbooks, and other expenses or fees associated with the course. Textbook allowance is limited to \$150 per class per term.
5. Expenses not eligible for reimbursement include but are not limited to pre-enrollment testing, graduation fees, transcript fees, computer and internet access fees, transportation costs, mileage, parking, school supplies, meals, and lodging. The City maintains discretion to deny reimbursement of any expense it deems ineligible.
6. Course education must be related to existing positions within the City of Gallup.
7. Classes may be taken at a public college or university. Private colleges and universities require cost sharing with the employee. With cost sharing, an online university may be an appropriate venue. The school of choice must be an accredited institution.
8. Employees must meet the residency requirements for in-state tuition. Employees not meeting in-state residency requirements will receive assistance equal to that of in-state tuition and fees.
9. Assistance for tuition and student fees will not exceed the average cost per in-state credit hour for the following four accredited New Mexico public colleges and universities: University of New Mexico, New Mexico State University, Eastern New Mexico University, and Western New Mexico University. The average rate will be determined by the Human Resources Director each term. The cost of textbooks may be reimbursed in addition to this amount.
10. The Tuition Assistance Policy will not duplicate scholarships or financial aid programs such as Pell grants, student loans, etc. If the employee receives such assistance, or any other reimbursement from any public or private source for a

course, the employee is only eligible for assistance from the City to the extent that the costs exceed assistance or reimbursement from other sources. It is the employee's responsibility to obtain necessary documentation from the school regarding grants, loans, scholarships, etc. and to submit such documentation to the Human Resources Department at the beginning of each term if requested.

11. Completion of a course must be verified with a grade of "C" or better for undergraduate-level courses or with a grade of "B" or better for graduate-level courses. If an incomplete grade, withdraw, audit or drop is received, the employee shall reimburse the City for any tuition paid by the City for said courses.
12. Classes should be taken after normal work hours to the extent possible in order to minimize the impact on department work schedules. If the class is only offered during work hours, only one class may be taken per term during normal work hours and the department head is responsible for documenting the employees alternative work schedule to ensure the minimum number of hours worked is met. Studying, classwork, and projects must be conducted on the employee's own time and is not permitted during work hours. The department head shall authorize reasonable use of office equipment for course work assignments.
13. An employee who receives assistance under the provisions of this policy is expected to remain in the employ of the City for a minimum of two (2) years following course or degree completion. If an employee voluntarily terminates employment, is separated, is not reappointed, or is terminated for cause, the employee must reimburse the City for all funds expended according to the following schedule:
 - a. Employee remains employed less than 12 months after course/degree completion: 100% repayment of tuition and book fees received while in the program.
 - b. Employee remains employed only 12-24 months after course/degree completion: 50% repayment of all tuition and book fees received while in the program.
14. Arrangements for repayment must be made with the City Clerk and full payment is due with one (1) year of separation from City employment. Deductions from sick leave and vacation leave pay-out will be made on the final paycheck toward the amount owed to the City for re-payment of tuition.
15. Repayment will not be required in the following circumstances:
 - a. Involuntary separation of reemployment due to a Reduction in Force.
 - b. Serious injury or illness of the employee that hinders the employee from successfully completing the term.

D. Procedure

1. Employees shall apply for tuition assistance by using the Tuition Assistance Form.
2. Tuition assistance applications must be submitted before the following deadlines for each semester:

June 30 for Fall Semester
(If deadline falls on a weekend, deadline will be on the Friday before the June 30 deadline date).

October 30 for Spring Semester
(If deadline falls on a weekend, deadline will be on the Friday before the November 30 deadline date).

April 30 for Summer Semester
(If deadline falls on a weekend, deadline will be on the Friday before the April 30 deadline date).

For institutions that do not follow a traditional schedule such as a quarter system, the application deadline is forty-five days before the first day of the term. *(If deadline falls on a weekend, deadline will be on the Friday before the deadline date).*

3. An employee must indicate on the Tuition Assistance Form, any financial assistance received from an outside source.
4. The approval process shall require review of the application by the department head and the Tuition Committee with final approval from the City Manager. All applications will be reviewed and applicants will receive notification of whether their request was approved or denied. The decision of the City Manager is final and not subject to grievance.
5. Within fourteen (14) days of the conclusion of each term, the employee must hand-deliver an official grade report to the Human Resources Director or designee. Failure to do so may be cause for suspension of tuition assistance for one term.
6. If an employee wishes to change course of study at any time, a new Tuition Assistance Form must be submitted for review and approval.
7. Violations of these provisions are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment.

E. Administration

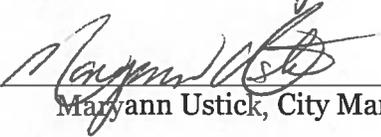
1. The Human Resources Director or designee is responsible for tracking and maintaining the Tuition Assistance Program. The Human Resources Director or designee shall be responsible for administering and coordinating the Assistance and processing tuition payments to the college or university.

2. Collection of monies owed by employees not in compliance with the provisions of the program will be administered by the City Clerk.

F. Exclusions

1. Temporary employees, seasonal employees, and probationary employees are not eligible to participate in the Tuition Assistance Program.
2. Employees covered by collective bargaining agreements will be subject to the provisions of those agreements.

Signed this 6th day of May, 2019



Maryann Ustick, City Manager

This policy will be addressed by: Human Resources Department

