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TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

This regulation outlines the process employees can use to request tuition reimbursement to support the city's commitment to the professional growth and development of employees. However, due to the popularity of this program and limited funding, it may not be possible to authorize all the requests for tuition reimbursement the city receives. Therefore, the city retains the right to amend, suspend, or terminate the tuition reimbursement program at any time. Additionally, there is no guarantee or promise of promotion or transfer to a new position or assignment for completing courses under this program.

II. EMPLOYEE ELIGIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION

Other than the exceptions noted below, all regular full- and part-time non-exempt and exempt employees who have completed one year of regular employment with the city prior to the start of the requested course(s) are eligible to apply for tuition reimbursement. Directors, senior managers, command staff, bargaining unit employees and employees in limited duration positions are not eligible to participate in the program.

Additionally, in order to be eligible for tuition reimbursement, an employee must have demonstrated satisfactory performance for at least one year. If an employee is or has been on any type of performance, work, or position alignment plan in the previous 12 months, or is expected to be put on such a plan in the next 12 months then the employee is not eligible for tuition reimbursement.

Federal wage laws require employers to compensate employees for time spent in courses under certain circumstances; however, the tuition reimbursement program is not designed to compensate participants for their course time. Therefore, to participate in the tuition reimbursement program the following requirements must be met:

- A. Course attendance must occur outside employees' regular working hours.
- B. Course attendance must be voluntary.
- C. Employees shall do no productive work for the city while attending course.
- D. The course cannot be directly related to the employees' present job at the city.

Under the Fair Labor Standards Act a course would not be considered directly related to the employee's present job if it:

- A. Teaches an employee how to do a new job;
- B. Teaches a new skill that would not improve handling of the present job; or
- C. Upgrades the employee to a higher skill, but is not intended to make the employee more efficient in the present job, even if the course may incidentally improve the employee's skills needed in the present job.

If a course is only available during the employee's scheduled work hours, and if business needs permit, the employee and his/her supervisor may attempt to rearrange the employee's schedule, or the employee may request to use accrued leave in accordance with the city's leave regulations to attend a course.

It is expected that educational activities will not interfere with the employee's performance and the city's business needs.

III. COURSE CRITERIA

A requested course must a) serve to enlarge the employee's perspective and capacity and prepare the employee for potential future job assignments with the city, or b) provide general academic instruction required for the employee to obtain a degree related to the employee's potential future city job assignments. In evaluating a tuition reimbursement request, employees may be asked to provide information outlining the course's content or degree requirements. Graded/for credit courses are preferred, but all requests will be considered.

IV. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The course for which reimbursement is requested must be offered by an accredited institution of higher education, such as Boise State University, College of Idaho, Northwest Nazarene University, Idaho State University, Treasure Valley Community College and the University of Idaho, or courses offered online through accredited out-of-state schools.

Human resources shall administer the tuition reimbursement program and shall determine what schools, institutions and courses qualify and how allocated funds are disbursed.

V. REIMBURSEMENT CRITERIA

The following criteria apply to tuition reimbursement:

- A. Eligible full-time employees whose tuition reimbursement request is approved can receive up to \$1,242 per semester, not to exceed a maximum of \$2,484 per fiscal year. Eligible part-time employees can receive a pro-rated amount per semester not to exceed a maximum of \$1,863 per fiscal year. Employees who are in their final semester and are taking more than one course during fall semester may be eligible for additional funds, not to exceed \$2,484, if there are funds remaining after all fall semester requests have been approved.
- B. Employees who receive education assistance through the GI bill, trust funds, scholarships, grants (Pell) or other sources must declare receipt of that assistance upon request for participation in the city's tuition reimbursement

program. In those circumstances only the difference between the aid received and the cost of the course, if any, will be reimbursed, up to a maximum of \$2,484 per eligible full-time employee in any one fiscal year and \$1,863 per eligible part-time employee in one fiscal year. Failure of the employee to inform the city of any other education aid assistance will result in the employee reimbursing the city for the difference, and the employee will no longer be eligible to participate in the program.

- C. Eligible employees will receive tuition reimbursement provided they complete the course within the specified time for that course, not to exceed twelve consecutive calendar months from the start of the course, and obtain a grade of "C" (2.0 on a 4.0 scale) or better, or "pass" if pass/fail, for the approved course, according to the following scale:
 - 1. 100% reimbursement for a course grade of A
 - 2. 90% reimbursement for a course grade of B
 - 3. 80% reimbursement for a course grade of C
 - 4. 80% reimbursement for passing a pass/fail graded course
 - 5. 80% reimbursement for non-credit/certificate course

Employees will be required to provide an unofficial transcript indicating the grade(s)/certificate received for the course(s).

- D. Employees who voluntarily terminate employment or are terminated for cause during enrollment in the course or up to twelve months after the course is completed are not eligible for any tuition reimbursement. Likewise, employees who withdraw or do not complete the approved course are not entitled to tuition reimbursement. As part of the tuition reimbursement application, if any tuition was reimbursed within the past twelve months, employees authorize the city to deduct the reimbursed amount from the employee's pay.
- E. Tuition, registration fees, required textbooks, and course-related fees (e.g. lab fee; online course fee) are reimbursable costs. All other costs are the employee's responsibility.
- F. Employees who were approved for reimbursement but are subsequently terminated due to a reduction in force or job elimination continue to be eligible to receive reimbursement for the approved course.
- G. Reimbursement will not be paid in advance of the employee completing the approved course.

VI. REQUEST AND REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURE

Requests for tuition reimbursement are on a first come, first served basis. Each fiscal year 50 percent of the available funds will be allocated for fall semester and 50 percent for the spring semester. Any funds remaining after fall and spring semesters have been reimbursed will be available for summer semester.

To be eligible for tuition reimbursement, the employee must request and complete the approval process with their department.

Completed requests must be received in human resources by the following deadlines:

Fall semester:	Between July 1 and August 15
Spring semester:	Between December 1 and January 15
Summer semester:	Between April 1 and May 15

Requests received after these deadlines may be considered if there are funds remaining for that semester.

Employees will use the following process to request and receive tuition reimbursement:

- A. Employees must complete a Pre-Course Tuition Reimbursement Request form [See Exhibit 3.17b] for each course and submit it to their supervisor and department director/designee for approval. The department director or designee is responsible for verifying that the employee meets the requirements for reimbursement. Employees must submit a separate request each semester and should only list courses to be taken during the semester.

After approval by the employee's department director/designee, human resources will evaluate the request and available funds and notify the employee via email whether their request is approved or denied.

- B. Within 30 days of the semester end date, employees must submit the following to human resources:
 1. A completed Post-Course Tuition Reimbursement Request form [See Exhibit 3.17c] for each course.
 2. An unofficial transcript from the academic institution indicating that the employee received an acceptable grade/certificate.
 3. A copy of the school invoice indicating the cost of tuition, registration and course fees, and proof through a receipt, canceled check, or other document indicating the employee has paid the tuition, registration and course fees.
 4. Documentation showing required textbook(s) for course, and receipt(s) for textbook(s).
- C. Upon approval of the request, reimbursement funds will be forwarded to the employee. Tuition reimbursement shall be paid out through Payroll and included in the employee's paycheck under "Non-Taxable Exempt Reimbursements."