

**City of Hickory
Tuition Assistance Program
Policy and Procedure**

- I. Policy
 - a. The City of Hickory provides opportunities for coworkers to improve skills and job performance or to prepare themselves for promotion opportunities within the City service by means of a tuition assistance program.

- II. Organization Affected
 - a. All departments.

- III. Definitions
 - a. Approved Course: An approved course is one which will either improve the coworker's ability to perform his/her present job or will help prepare him/her for a job with the City which will demand a higher level of responsibility and/or skill.

 - b. Approved Institution: Any regionally accredited college, university, technical institute or correspondence school, or any other institution approved by the City. Regionally accredited schools are predominantly academically oriented, non-profit institutions.

 - c. Several of the larger, for-profit schools have sought and received regional accreditation (e.g.: University of Phoenix). Only if all other avenues of obtaining the degree sought have been exhausted will the City of Hickory consider approval of a tuition assistance request at a for-profit school. This approval will take place on a case by case basis with the involvement of the coworker and his/her department.

 - d. Eligible Expenses: At community colleges, tuition, registration fees, laboratory fees, required textbook(s) and student fees are eligible reimbursement expenses. Special equipment, supplemental reading books, tools, and miscellaneous supplies such as pencils and paper are not reimbursable expenditures. At other state-supported colleges and universities, full tuition costs will be eligible for reimbursement. At private or out-of-state colleges, reimbursement for tuition will be based on current tuition charges at state-supported schools. All reimbursement is subject to availability of funds and approval of the department head. The maximum reimbursement per coworker per fiscal year is \$2000.00.

 - e. Successful Course Completion: Successful course completion will normally be construed to be a grade of "C" or better when grade letters are given. Otherwise, as in the case of Pass/Fail courses, or in the course when no grade is given, a written statement of successful completion from the instructor will be equally acceptable to demonstrate successful completion of a course.

- IV. Procedure/Rule
 - a. All full-time coworkers who have completed one year of service and who are not receiving educational financial assistance from another source will be eligible to apply for financial assistance under this program. In cases where a coworker is receiving funds from another source, which do not cover all the expenses, the City's program may be used to help defray costs over the amount of the funds received for approved courses.

- b. In order to apply for the tuition assistance program, the following steps are to be taken by the coworker:
 - i. The coworker obtains and completes in duplicate a Tuition Assistance Program Application form as soon as he/she decides to take a course. The training coordinator is available for career counseling and course selection and information on area schools.
 - ii. All copies of the completed application are to be submitted to the coworker's department head. After the course and institution are approved by the department head, two copies of the application are submitted to the training coordinator. Coworkers who are embarking on a degree program are asked to submit a curriculum listing along with their application form. Once the program is approved, repeated applications to the TAP are not needed. Exception: If more than 12 months have passed since the coworker last took a class, or if the coworker changes curriculum, another application is required.
 - iii. If the supervisor or department head does not approve an application, he/she will discuss with the coworker the reasons for not approving the application.
 - iv. After the training coordinator reviews the application, a copy will be returned to the coworker. A Refund Request Form will be attached for the employee to use to keep a formal record of expenditures.
- c. After successful completion of the course, the coworker may apply for reimbursement of eligible expenses using the following steps:
 - i. Complete a Tuition Assistance Program Refund Request form, listing all eligible expenditures. Sign the note on the back of the form in the presence of a notary public. Attach all receipts and verification of passing grade and submit to the department head.
 - ii. After review of the department head, the coworker submits the TAP Refund Request form with attachments to the training coordinator within thirty (30) calendar days after completing the course or five days prior to the end of the fiscal year, whichever comes first.
 - iii. After verification of reported expenses, the training coordinator will send the TAP Refund Request form with attachments to the finance department for reimbursement of expenses for which the employee is eligible.
 - iv. After reimbursement is received, coworker is expected to remain employed with the City of Hickory for three (3) years. If coworker leaves prior to three years employment, coworker will be required to repay all or part of reimbursement depending upon amount of service time completed. Amount to be repaid will be calculated on a prorated basis.

V. Attachments

- a. Attachment 1: Tuition Assistance Program application form
- b. Attachment 2: Tuition Assistance Program refund form

Effective Date: February 1, 2013 for all new participants
July 1, 2013 for students enrolled prior to the approval date on this policy

Approved:


Mick Berry, City Manager

Date: February 1, 2013