

# PERSONNEL RULES & REGULATIONS MANUAL

## SECTION 1300 EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

### **Section 1301. Purpose**

The City of Gaithersburg believes that training and development are integral components of work performance and are inherently tied to the City's mission, goals, workforce planning, and the provision of services to the public. The City values the potential of its employees and believes that developing employee potential, through coaching, education and training, and on-the-job training is critical to organizational effectiveness.

It is the responsibility of the Department Head, the supervisor, and the employee, working in partnership, to determine the work goals and training needs for each. Specific training is subject to management approval based on available resources. The program enables the City to fill future positions from within its own ranks and provides for the professional growth of employees.

### **Section 1302. Training & Development Objectives**

The objectives shall be designed and established to achieve the following:

- a. Improve the quality of services provided by the City through its staff.
- b. Improve the quality of performance for each individual employee and the various departments of the City.
- c. Prepare employees for career advancement **within the City**.
- d. Create a work force with the occupational skills necessary to meet current and future **City** employment needs.
- e. Keep employees current on changing technologies in the workplace.

### **Section 1303. Training & Development Responsibilities**

#### a. **Human Resources Department**

The administration of employee training and development falls under the general responsibility of the Human Resources Department, but shall strongly depend on input and cooperation of all Departments.

#### b. **Department Heads**

Department Heads shall share in the responsibility for an effective personnel development program. Department Heads will ensure that training and development plans are prepared, updated, and discussed by supervisors and employees as part of the performance evaluation process and are consistent with the mission and needs of the Department.

#### c. **Supervisors**

Supervisors have the primary responsibility for initiating communication about training and individual development including but not limited to:

1. Working in partnership with individual employees to assess training needs and coordinate work group and individual employee development plans.
2. Ensuring implementation of employee development plans.

3. Incorporating training and development into the performance evaluation process.

d. **Employees**

City employees have responsibility for initiating discussion to identify and assess their own specific training needs including but not limited to:

1. Working in partnership with supervisors to meet their own training and development needs and those of the work group.

2. City employees may identify, where possible, certain needs related to their individual work experiences which are required to meet all of the performance and advancement criteria which may be defined and established by City management.

**Section 1304. Tuition Assistance**

**1304.1 Purpose**

To encourage and support the efforts of City of Gaithersburg employees to obtain skills, knowledge, and abilities that increase the effectiveness of work performance in their present position and improve their career opportunities in the City of Gaithersburg.

**1304.2 Eligibility**

All classified employees and unclassified management employees of the City are eligible for this benefit after they have successfully completed their probationary period as set forth in Section 308, New Hires; except, that a sworn police officer will be eligible for this benefit after he/she successfully completes 12 months of his/her 24-month probationary period. Assistance is not available to employees on disciplinary probation or in a leave status.

**1304.3 Funding Amount**

Tuition assistance funds are based on budget ~~allocations and~~ availability. Availability of funds is limited to those budgeted in the fiscal year in which ~~the reimbursement occurs assistance is requested~~; funds cannot be split between fiscal years. Funds are ~~distributed-reimbursed~~ based on the fiscal year in which the course ~~starts ends~~.

**1304.4 Criteria**

a. An employee who receives tuition assistance must agree to remain employed by the City for a period of at least 24 months following completion of the course for which tuition assistance funds were received. Any employee who receives tuition assistance and leaves City employment within 12 months of course completion shall repay to the City all tuition assistance funds they received during the 12 months prior to actual date of separation from City employment. Any employee who receives tuition assistance and leaves City employment between 12 and 24 months of course completion shall repay to the City the pro-rated amount due depending on the number of months remaining before the 24-month commitment is met. The amount of repaid tuition assistance funds may be reduced or waived by the City Manager in the event that the employee is separated from employment due to a reduction in force.

As a recipient of tuition assistance, the employee authorizes the City to deduct the balance owed for tuition assistance from his/her paycheck or any other final payments due to the employee. The employee understands that, if sufficient funds are not available to satisfy the tuition assistance owed to the City, the employee will pay the balance owed to the City by personal check, cash, or money order on or before their final workday. The tuition assistance does not have to be repaid if the employee dies or is considered disabled under the City's long-term disability insurance program.

b. The employee and the supervisor must be able to demonstrate that the course work is:

1. Directly related to the employee's current City work or normal career progression; or
2. Part of a degree program or curriculum that is City job related; or

3. Directly supportive or improves skills required for current job assignments, duties, or responsibilities that are a condition of continued employment; or

4. Required by law or regulation.

Course work that does not qualify for tuition assistance as job-related under the criteria above may be approved by the City Manager if it is to prepare the employee to make a career change within the City. This approval must be in writing and be obtained prior to registration ~~or payment~~ for any course.

c. The course work must allow the employee to:

1. Obtain education or training towards a certificate, associate degree, undergraduate degree, or graduate degree (higher education institutions must be fully accredited); or

2. Take a credit or non-credit course or seminar; or

3. Complete a GED program (limited to two tests per employee).

d. Tuition Assistance funds may be used for training or education offered by one of the following public or private organizations where the primary purpose is educational:

1. College or university; or

2. Vocational or business school; or

3. Professional, scientific, or technical institute; or

4. An agency or business that offers courses or training.

e. The following do not qualify for tuition assistance:

1. Auditing of a course; or

2. Credit courses taken on an audit basis (e.g., no grade); or

3. Exams given to receive credit for work life experience; or

4. Courses or classes that are self-paced or that are open-ended; or

5. Courses or classes for which a letter grade or pass/fail grade is not earned; or

6. Books, manuals, software, supplies, etc., required for the course or any other materials and items that may be used outside of the class (calculators, computers, etc.); or

7. Application fees or other extra fees such as late registration, library book returns, parking, travel, food, lodging, and other costs incidental to the credit courses.

#### **1304.5 Course Completion/Submission of Grades**

Employees requesting tuition assistance are eligible to be reimbursed only for approved courses that are successfully completed. Successful completion of a course is a grade equivalent of a "C" or better in each undergraduate course and grade equivalent of a "B" or better for each graduate course. In circumstances where pass/fail is the only grading system used, a pass grade must be earned.

The employee's grade report must be submitted to the Human Resources Department with all other required receipts and documentation to verify that the course was successfully completed (see Section 1308.4, Steps for Reimbursement).

Classes must be taken during off-duty hours or during periods of approved leave. No compensatory leave accrual or overtime compensation will be granted for courses taken in off-duty hours.

The employee's department is responsible for maintaining tuition assistance records on each employee who uses the program, including information on what courses were taken, dates of courses, costs of tuition, and completion of courses.

#### **1304.6 Canceled or Rescheduled Courses**

In the event that an approved class is canceled or rescheduled, an alternate class may be selected. However, to be eligible for tuition assistance reimbursement, the employee must repeat the approval process within two weeks after the course start date.

#### **1304.7 Procedures**

a. **How to Apply**

The Tuition Assistance Program Application must be completed prior to course registration to determine if the expenses for the class are eligible for reimbursement. These submissions must be received by the supervisor and Department Head within a reasonable period prior to the day the class starts. Failure to submit the request in a timely manner ~~may shall~~ cause it to be denied ~~at the discretion of the Department Head~~. The City will not reimburse an employee for late fees.

b. **Steps for Approval**

1. ~~Requests for the tuition assistance submitted after the course has been completed may not be approved for reimbursement at the discretion of the Department Head.~~ Prior to course registration, the employee completes Section I of the Tuition Assistance Application Form and submits it to the supervisor for approval.

2. The supervisor reviews the Form and completes Section II, Departmental Endorsement, indicating relevance, job relatedness, and compliance with policy. If the request is approved, the Form must be signed by the supervisor and Department Head and forwarded to the Human Resources Department. If the request is denied by the supervisor and/or Department Head, the Form is returned to the requesting employee.

3. The Director of Human Resources or his/her designee reviews the form for compliance with policy and determines availability of funds. If approved, the original Form remains in the Human Resources Department and copies are returned to the Department Head and the employee. The employee then registers for the course, pays for the course with his/her personal funds, and attends the course.

Under no circumstances will payment for tuition assistance funds be advanced to an employee by the City. An employee may request payment for unused annual leave beyond the limit established in the current policy (Section 702.4[b] of this Manual) for the purpose of paying for an approved course. In such cases, a copy of the approved Tuition Assistance Form should be attached to the Request to Sell Annual Leave Form which such request is submitted.

#### **1304.8 Steps for Reimbursement**

After the tuition assistance request has been approved and the course has been successfully completed, the employee may request reimbursement for the course. Requests for reimbursement must be submitted within thirty (30) days of the end of the fiscal year for which the tuition assistance funds were approved.

To request reimbursement:

1. Employee submits the grade report for the course completed and the paid tuition bill along with the course description, fee schedule from the course catalog, and the original receipts verifying payment of assistance amount requested to the Human Resources Department. Receipts must include employee's name and must provide a detailed proof of payment (itemized receipt, credit card statement, contract, etc.).
2. Human Resources staff verifies the documentation and forwards to the Finance & Administration Department for issuance of a reimbursement check.
3. Finance & Administration Department forwards check to employee.

**Section 1305. Certification Examinations**

The City will pay expenses incurred for maintaining required certifications and licensures. The City may pay for initial certifications and licensures as recommended by the supervisor and approved by the Department Head. Expenses may include registration, lodging, travel, and testing on City time.

The Department Head will review requests for initial examination expenses and, if deemed appropriate, will approve City payment of expenses incurred in obtaining the certification.

The City will pay only for expenses incurred relative to the first examination of any specific certification which is applicable to the employee's position within the City's organizational structure. If the employee fails the test on his/her first attempt, all expenses related to subsequent testing to receive the certification will be the sole responsibility of the employee.

When the City pays expenses incurred in obtaining specialized job-related certification, the employee will incur an obligation to continue employment with the City for one year from the date of certification completion. If an obligated employee voluntarily resigns from City employment within one year after the end date of the certification completion, the employee will reimburse the City a pro-rated portion of the cost of the certification expenses.