



# City of Asheville

## Career Development Education

### PURPOSE

The City of Asheville's **Career Development Education (CDE)** program provides eligible employees with the opportunity to obtain, maintain, or improve their professional competencies. Educational reimbursement may be used for successful completion of approved work-related classes or accredited courses leading to an undergraduate or graduate degree that supports the mission of the City. The City's Department Directors, in conjunction with the Human Resources Department, have the sole discretion to determine whether a course relates to an employee's current position and whether that course meets the guidelines of the CDE program.

### SPECIFICATIONS

**Career Development Education** includes the following two avenues for employee education:

- a) General Tuition Reimbursement
- b) Western Carolina University MPA Program

### POLICY

#### 1. Employee Eligibility

Any regular full-time employee who has successfully completed their evaluation period is eligible for consideration of financial reimbursements under the CDE program.

#### 2. School Eligibility

Courses must be taken through an accredited public or private business or trade school, college or university, correspondence school, or other institution approved by Human Resources.

#### 3. Course Eligibility

Courses of education or training must be in areas related to a City career field and must meet the following requirements:

- a. The course must be directly related to professional development in the employee's current City job; or
- b. The course will make the employee more promotable within the City and is related to a current City position, which is within the employee's realistic promotional line; or

c. The course work is required in a curriculum program leading to a degree or certification that is applicable (required or preferred) to a current City of Asheville job classification.

#### 4. Tuition and Fee Provisions

a. The maximum reimbursement allowed per employee per fiscal year is dependent upon the number of employees accepted to the program each year. If the employee completes courses which exceed the maximum allowable reimbursement, the employee shall be responsible for payment of the balance.

b. Tuition, registration fees, books, laboratory fees and required materials are eligible expenses for reimbursement. Other expenses such as special equipment (calculators), pencils, paper, clothing, and miscellaneous supplies are not reimbursable.

c. The amount of reimbursement shall be reduced by any financial assistance the employee receives from any outside source (i.e. the Veteran's Administration). When applying for tuition reimbursement, the employee must indicate on the Tuition Reimbursement Application form any financial assistance received from an outside source which the employee is not required to repay.

d. Tuition costs, to the amount authorized, may be paid to the employee upon presentation of proof of tuition payment and a passing grade of "C" or higher (i.e. at the end of each semester). Requests for reimbursement must be filed with the Human Resources Department within thirty (30) days of course completion.

e. If an employee terminates from City employment for any reason within twelve months of completion of the course, the employee shall return to the City 100% of the reimbursement. If the amount owed exceeds the employee's final paycheck and pay out, the employee is expected to repay the City in full upon termination. An employee who fails to repay the City will be invoiced.

f. Specialized job-related training required by a Department such as short-term workshops, seminars, classes to update job skills, and certification courses are not eligible for reimbursement under the CDE program. These training expenses should be funded through the training and travel line item of each department's annual budget.

#### 5. Tax Considerations

The taxability of payments under the tuition reimbursement plan is in accordance with current Internal Revenue Service guidelines.

#### 6. Work Schedule Limitations

a. Unless specific approval of both the employee's supervisor and the Human Resources Department is obtained in advance, an employee may not take a course during scheduled working hours. When the educational program requires being away from one's job during normal work hours, the employee and her or his supervisor must agree on such a schedule in advance and make necessary arrangements to assure that expectations for ongoing work assignments are met. No legal or contractual obligations for overtime premium can be

incurred as a result of employees taking a course that will be reimbursed under this policy during their scheduled working hours.

b. Participation in the tuition reimbursement program should not in any way interfere with the employee's ability to perform her or his job.

## **PROCEDURES**

1. Application for tuition reimbursement in FY2014 must be initiated by completion of a Tuition Reimbursement Application Form and approved by Human Resources prior to the start of the desired course. Dates to submit: July 1 – 31, 2013.
2. The employee submits the Tuition Reimbursement Application Form along with a completed Career Plan to Human Resources.
3. Human Resources will determine the employee's eligibility and the reimbursable tuition amount; verify accreditation of the school; and notify the employee in writing of the approval or disapproval and the maximum amount that may be reimbursed.
4. When the course has been completed, the employee will submit proof of payment and of the passing grade to Human Resources within thirty (30) days. Human Resources will compute the maximum reimbursable amount and request that payment be made.
5. Approved and subsequently paid tuition reimbursement requests shall be made part of the employee's personnel file.

## **WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY MPA PROGRAM**

The City of Asheville in collaboration with Western Carolina University offers a Fellowship to City of Asheville employees who are seeking their Masters of Public Affairs (MPA) degree. The Human Resources Department will administer the Fellowship application process.

Minority/Female/Physically Challenged employees are encouraged to apply for this Fellowship.

### **1. Eligible Employees**

Regular, full-time employees of the City who have worked in a full-time position for a minimum of one year are eligible to apply for a financial grant under this program. The Human Resources Director, Assistant City Manager and City Manager will recommend candidates to Western Carolina University. Western Carolina University's Dean of Research and Graduate Studies will be responsible for selecting the candidates for the program. Two (2) candidates will be chosen per academic year.

### **2. Eligible Courses**

Courses at Western Carolina University's Master's of Public Affairs degree program.

Western Carolina University requires:

- a. Graduate application

- b. Official Copies of Undergraduate transcripts
- c. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores

### 3. Procedure

- a. Nominated employees must submit the MPA Fellowship Application and Career Plan forms to the Human Resources Department. The application form requires concurrence and signature of your division head and the approval of your department director. At this time you and your department director should discuss any potential schedule adjustment needed for you to complete the degree program. If a schedule adjustment results in the use of a flex schedule, your department director will need to get approval from the City Manager or Assistant City Manager before approving your request.
- b. Fellowship candidates must sign a written agreement with the City promising to repay the City for any expenses paid by the City should employment terminate for any reason, including but not limited to discharge, resignation, retirement, prior to a date within one (1) year following course completion.
- c. Fellowships are awarded for one academic year. Funds not used during that academic year will be forfeited. Employees who do not take courses for one (1) calendar year will be removed from the program and must reapply unless arrangements are made with the Human Resources Director because of extenuating circumstances.
- d. The City of Asheville's Human Resources Director or his/her designee will notify fellowship applicants of the Dean's decision in writing.