

**CITY OF FLAGSTAFF**  
**City Employee Directives # 2020-01**

**Title:** TUTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**Effective:** 2/05/2020 **Revision:**

**Contact:** Office of Human Resources (928-213-2090)

**I. PURPOSE**

The City of Flagstaff values higher education for its employees to enhance performance, professional development and employee retention. To this purpose, the City offers a Tuition Assistance Program for college level classes through certain accredited colleges or universities. This Program is subject to approval by the City Council each fiscal year based on availability of funds, as part of the adopted budget process.

**II. TUTION ASSISTANCE**

**A. Eligibility**

1. All tenured and exempt employees are eligible for the Tuition Assistance Program. Contract temporary employees whose contract is more than two (2) years are eligible to participate in the Program. Temporary and probationary employees are not eligible for tuition assistance.
2. An employee must have worked for the City for a period of one (1) continuous year. Temporary service does not apply toward the one (1)-year period. Contract Temporary employees whose contract is for more than two (2) years would be eligible for this program. The contract temporary employee's time would count towards the one (1) year continuous service.
3. An employee who transfers to another City position during the semester or prior to receiving tuition assistance shall not be penalized and shall retain the assistance authorization as approved by the originating Division Director for the current Program period.

**B. Guidelines**

1. Tuition assistance will only be provided for coursework through an accredited community college, college or university (including on-line coursework). The community college, college or university must be one that is recognized by one of the following regional accrediting associations:
  - a. North Central Association
  - b. Northwest Association
  - c. Middle States Association

- d. New England Association
  - e. Southern Association
  - f. Western Association
  - g. Distance Education Accrediting Commission
2. Courses must meet one of the following guidelines to be eligible for tuition assistance:
- a. Non-Degree Seeking Students:
    - i. Individual college level course related to the employee’s current position or any position within the City which the employee could reasonably aspire.
    - ii. Individual college level course that is customer service focused.
  - b. Degree Seeking Students:
    - i. Any class necessary to obtain a degree related to the employee’s current position or any position within the City. If the employee anticipates there may be a question about the relation of the class or degree, the employee should provide a written explanation when applying for the tuition assistance.
3. Employees must use personal time to attend class(es) unless prior approval has been granted by the Division Director or their designee.

**C. Application Process**

- 1. The application for tuition assistance shall be approved and signed by the employee’s chain of command indicating their approval and support of the request.
- 2. Eligible employees shall submit their Tuition Assistance Program Application to the Human Resources Division by the established deadline.
- 3. Employees must submit their Tuition Assistance Program Application each semester in order to maintain necessary information on courses and departmental approval.

4. The Human Resources Division will respond to each Tuition Assistance Program Application in writing to indicate approval or denial of participation in the program.

**D. Assistance Process**

1. A City employee who has been approved to receive tuition assistance from the City, will pay for the class, attend the class and receive a letter grade of “B” or better in the class. A grade of Pass in a Pass/Fail class will be considered eligible for assistance.
2. Within 30 days of the conclusion of each semester or course of study the employee shall submit:
  - a. A detailed receipt for payment of the classes in which tuition assistance is being requested. The receipt will specifically indicate the amount of tuition charged to the employee, separate from all other fees and expenses.
  - b. Documentation showing the official grade of “B” or better for the class(es) taken in which the employee is requesting tuition assistance.
3. Tuition Assistance Program payments will be processed through Accounts Payable and the employee will receive a separate check.
4. Employees who feel they are unable to earn a “B” or better due to a disability and would like to request a reasonable accommodation, should contact the Human Resources Division Director. The employee will provide a disability certification from the college or university and each request will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

**E. Assistance Rates**

1. Eligible employees will receive tuition assistance for approved classes at a rate of up to 100% (up to the maximum annual assistance allowed by the IRS) based on budgeted funding available for this program.
2. At the beginning of each semester the Human Resources Division will calculate the amount of assistance available to employees based on the approved Tuition Assistance Program Applications and will notify all approved participants of the anticipated assistance amount they are eligible to receive. Budgeted monies will be distributed evenly among approved applications. This notification will be provided in time for the

participant to decide whether or not they wish to continue with the classes for which they are registered. It will be the employee’s responsibility to follow the institution’s required steps to withdraw from classes and be eligible for a refund from the college or university.

3. Employees participating in this program may be eligible for four (4) semesters each year (example: fall, winter, spring and summer) starting in the fiscal year. Summer and winter sessions, for purposes of tuition assistance, are defined as one semester regardless of the number of sessions the employee participates in.
4. This Tuition Assistance Program applies to tuition only and does not include books or other fees.
5. This Tuition Assistance Program is designed to alleviate the burden of out of pocket tuition expenses for eligible employees. Employees shall not profit from this program and will not submit for assistance any amount for which they are receiving a scholarship, grant or financial aid from any other company or source, including the Veterans Administration or a discount from the institution.

**F. Repayment**

1. Employees who do not comply with the thirty (30)-day submission deadline of appropriate documentation will not be eligible for assistance.
2. If an employee voluntarily leaves the City within twenty-four (24) months of receiving tuition assistance, the employee must refund all tuition assistance payments made by the City in the twenty-four (24) month period prior to the last day of employment according to the table below.
3. An employee who terminates employment with the City agrees to repay tuition assistance received in the following manner:

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Time Elapsed Amount of time between the date(s) of the Tuition Assistance and the employee’s separation date	Percentage of Repayment Applicable to the total amount of the Tuition Assistance received during the 24 months prior to the employee’s separation date
6 months or less	100%
More than 6 months but less than 12 months	75%
More than 12 months but less than 18 months	50%
More than 18 months but less than 24 months	25%
<p>Examples: Employee leaves the City organization on July 1, 2019. Employee has received the following tuition assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7/1/2016 \$1,000 assistance paid more than 24 months prior to the employee’s separation \$0 owed</li> <li>• 8/1/2017 \$1,000 assistance paid 23 months prior to the employee’s separation 25% or \$250 owed</li> <li>• 3/1/2018 \$1,000 assistance paid 16 months prior to the employee’s separation 50% or \$500 owed</li> <li>• The employee would owe the City \$750 for tuition assistance received in the previous 24-month period prior to separation.</li> </ul>	

4. The employee must agree to the repayment agreement. This includes the withholding of deductions from their final paycheck, including base salary, add pay, vacation pay and/or expense reimbursement monies up to the amount due the City for the repayment of tuition assistance in order to be eligible to participate in the Tuition Assistance Program.
5. An employee who is terminated for cause or voluntarily terminates employment automatically forfeits any request for assistance not already paid.
6. If the employee’s last paycheck is distributed prior to Human Resources’ knowledge of the termination, repayment will be handled through the City’s billing process. After six months, any unpaid balances will be forwarded to collections and the employee will be responsible for the cost of the collection, including any attorney fees and/or court costs.
7. Exceptions to the repayment requirement may be made for special circumstances (i.e. retirement). Exceptions may be granted through the

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Division Director, with recommendation of the Human Resources Director and final approval by the City Manager.

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Greg Clifton, City Manager

\_\_\_\_\_ Dated

**ATTACHMENTS**

Tuition Assistance Program Application