

# SARASOTA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

## Educational Assistance Guidelines Talent & Performance Management

In accordance to Human Resource's 5.03 Educational Assistance procedures (as amended), "Financial assistance shall be available to employees in established positions who have successfully completed any required probationary initial period, have received an overall achieves or exceeds rating on their performance review or are in a position classified as At-Will. Eligible employees may be reimbursed for a portion of tuition expenses for approved educational courses that relate to the employee's present job or a reasonably attainable promotional objective. Conditions, requirements and approval for reimbursement shall be determined pursuant to guidelines issued by the office of Organizational & Employee Development."

**\*Employees in a classification covered under the IAFF should consult with the Collective Bargaining Agreement and Department General Orders.**

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### GUIDELINES:

1. It is the employee's responsibility to complete the Educational Assistance Request Form for each course and submit to their Manager. The employee must request reimbursement within 90 days of commencement of the class. Eligibility and approval shall be determined, in advance by the Manager, prior to commencement of the class. Approval shall be subject to the availability of funds in the current fiscal year. Authorized courses should be determined as follows:
  - a. **Job Related and Non-Job Related Courses** – Reimbursement for completed courses relate directly to the present duties and responsibilities of the employee or required for an approved degree program (AS/AA; BS/BA; MS/MA/MBA; or Executive MBA) shall be based on grades attained according to the following schedule:  
A = 90%; B = 80%; C = 70%; and below C = 0%
  - b. **Non-Graded Courses (Pass/Fail)** directly applicable to the present duties. Employee shall be reimbursed at 90% of the tuition cost upon receipt of a "pass" status for non-graded courses upon commencement.
  - c. **Part-Time Employees** shall be eligible for a prorated amount of the reimbursement allowable to full-time employees.
  - d. **Private Schools** – Courses taken at private institutions of higher learning or taken on-line shall be reimbursed based on fees charged for comparable level courses offered through the State University System.
  - e. **Executive MBA** – Employee shall obtain Deputy County Administrator, Chief Officer or Executive Director Approval for coverage of the Executive MBA Program. This additional approval must be indicated in the Management approval area of the Request Form.

2. It is the employee's responsibility to retain the approved Educational Assistance Request Form and applicable information until commencement of class and receipt of final grade or pass status for non-graded course. Upon successful completion of course, employee shall submit their Educational Assistance packet to Talent & Performance Management (TPM) Service Center, which will include the following items:
  - a. Completed and approved Educational Assistance Request Form
  - b. Proof of registration (indicates employee's name, course name, number of credits and course cost)
  - c. Proof of payment (payment receipt or documentation indicating course is paid-in-full)
  - d. Student loan financial documentation (if applicable)
  - e. Final grade or proof of pass status

To ensure timely processing of reimbursement, the Education Assistance packet must be complete, including all applicable attachments, as indicated above, and completion of the Request Form (all fields and signature).

3. If the cost of the course is less than the FL State University System rate, then the reimbursement amount shall be calculated by percentage of the actual cost, dependant on the final grade received.
4. Upon approval and entry of Educational Assistance information into the employee's on-line transcript, the TPM Service Advisor shall submit the Educational Assistance packet to the Clerk of Circuit Course/Finance Office in the Administration Center, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, for payment.
5. Employees separating from employment shall be required to repay any reimbursements received in the 12 months prior to separation. Repayment may be withheld from the employee's final pay.
6. Identified special additional tuition and course lab fees are reimbursable. However, fees for parking, books, or set semester fees are not reimbursable.
7. Any financial assistance received by an employee under the GI Bill or other educational assistance program shall have precedence over Educational Assistance from the County. Employees eligible for Educational Assistance under any program shall have their County benefits reduced on a dollar-for-dollar basis for any other benefits received.

8. The State University Rates for tuition costs will be updated annually in the summer and posted on Talent & performance Management's website. The 2009-2010 Florida's State University Rates are as follows:

<b>University of South Florida</b>	<b>(Sarasota Campus)</b>	<b>(St. Pete Campus)</b>
	<u>2009</u>	<u>2009</u>
BA / BS Degree	\$121.85/credit hour	\$123.43/credit hour
MA / MS / MBA Degree	\$311.54/credit hour	\$313.12/credit hour
<b>University of South Florida</b>	<b>USF Polytechnic (Lakeland Campus)</b>	<b>(Tampa Campus)</b>
	<u>2009</u>	<u>2009</u>
BA / BS Degree	\$116.20/credit hour	\$150.10/credit hour **
MA / MS / MBA Degree	\$305.89/credit hour	\$331.79/credit hour **
Executive MBA Degree	N/A	\$ Approx \$1000.00 (Varies Per Semester)
<b>Florida State University</b>	<u>2009</u>	
BA / BS Degree	\$121.65/credit hour	
MA / MS / MBA Degree	\$307.23/credit hour	
<b>State College of Florida (formerly MCC)</b>	<u>2009</u>	
AA / AS Degree	\$87.88/credit hour **	
BA / BS Degree	\$87.88/credit hour	

Courses taken at private institutions of higher learning or via on-line shall be reimbursed based on the above fees charged for comparable level courses offered through the State University System.

*\*\* Indicates private school or on-line course rates per that particular degree.*

If you have any questions, please contact the TPM Employee Service Center at 861-5353.

cc: Shelly Adkins, Manager of Accounts Payable, Clerk of Circuit Court  
Peter Ramsden, Director of Finance, Clerk of the Circuit Court