

Tuition Reimbursement Policy: Educational Assistance Program

Purpose

The Educational Assistance Program promotes the County's goal of investing in workforce development. As part of the Educational Assistance Program, tuition reimbursement is intended to provide financial assistance to employees who pursue job-related, County career-enhancing secondary education at accredited institutions of higher education. The tuition reimbursement is not intended to aid with staff development training or continuing professional education.

Rockdale County wants to encourage and assist employees in enhancing their knowledge, skills, or abilities in their current position with the County or to lead them to acquire qualifications necessary for higher-level positions within the County.

Scope

Subject to the conditions herein, Rockdale County will reimburse the cost of tuition for in-person or online job-related post-secondary education (undergraduate or graduate) up to \$1,000 twice per year (for a maximum of \$2,000 per fiscal year) to eligible permanent, full-time employees. Employees who receive additional financial assistance towards tuition, including scholarships, grants, loans, or Veterans' education benefits, will be eligible for reimbursement only for the amount not covered by the external funding. The reimbursable amount of up to \$1,000 twice per year (for a maximum of \$2,000 per fiscal year) still applies if external forms of education funding are used.

Employee Eligibility

Permanent, full-time employees are eligible for participation in the Educational Assistance Program provided the following requirements are met:

- Successful completion of probationary period and at least 12 months of service with Rockdale County.
- Do not currently have a performance improvement plan (PIP) or a final written reprimand.
- At minimum a performance rating of (2 - Solid Performer) on the employees' most recent annual performance evaluation.
 - ***Performance Evaluation Rating Scale:***
 - **4 = Top Performer:** Extraordinary performance; work is exemplary and professional, exceeds job requirements and results expected by substantial degree.
 - **3 = Strong Performer:** Above expectations; most work is characterized by accomplishments beyond the job requirements; significantly and regularly performs at a level above that expected.
 - **2 = Solid Performer:** Fully meets job requirements; is consistently effective and competent; achieves results expected.

- **1 = Needs Improvement:** Needs some improvement to fully meet job requirements; work is acceptable in most respects but does not fully meet expectations.

Roles & Responsibilities

- I. **Employee:** The employee is responsible for reviewing the Educational Assistance Program Policy before submitting their application for tuition reimbursement. The employee must work with their manager to determine initial program eligibility. The employee must ensure that all work-related duties and obligations are still met throughout the enrolled course(s). The employee must submit a completed tuition reimbursement application and course schedule to their manager before the course date for review, recommendation, and signature. Upon completing the course(s), the employee is responsible for submitting the request for payment to the Department of Talent Management within 90 days of the course or program end date.
- II. **Manager:** The manager's responsibility is to conduct the initial review of employee eligibility to participate in the Educational Assistance Program. The manager will complete the initial review of the employee's tuition reimbursement application. The initial review will verify the application is error-free, all required course information is listed, and the course schedule does not conflict with the employee's work schedule or obligations. The manager will make an initial recommendation for approval or denial of the application and forward the signed copy and course schedule to the Department Head or Authorized Authority for review. If it is determined that the employee does not meet the initial minimum eligibility requirements, the manager will document on the application that it is not recommended for approval and justification as to why. The manager will return the signed application to the applicant with justification, and the application will be temporarily denied until all outstanding requirements are met.
- III. **Department Head or Authorized Authority:** The Department Head or Authorized Authority is responsible for conducting the final department review of the tuition reimbursement application before submitting it to the Department of Talent Management. The Department Head or Authorized Authority will verify employee eligibility, no work schedule conflict, and/or career path relevance. The Department Head or Authorized Authority will recommend approval or denial of the application and forward a signed copy along with the course schedule to the Department of Talent Management.
- IV. **Department of Talent Management:** The Department of Talent Management is responsible for serving as the final approval authority for all submitted tuition and reimbursement applications. The Department of Talent Management will review all applications submitted prior to the course start date for supporting documentation, final evaluation of job and/or career path relevancy, and application completion. Upon review, the application will be signed by the Director of Talent Management, and an approval notification with instructions for requesting payment after successful course completion will be sent to the applicant.

Approved Education Types

- I. **Post-Secondary Education:** Accredited post-secondary institutions of learning (junior college, college, or university) that are recognized by either national or regional higher education accrediting bodies.

Application & Scheduling Criteria

All tuition reimbursement applications must be submitted to the Department of Talent Management within a respectable period prior to the course start date. Courses are to be scheduled outside of regular work hours. However, employees' work schedules may be adjusted to accommodate in-office workload permits. ~~If a course is available only during normal working hours, final approval for flexible scheduling will be at the discretion of the Department Head or Authorized representative.~~

Application Procedure

The application for tuition reimbursement will first be completed and signed by the employee. The employee will submit their completed application and course schedule to their manager for initial review, signature, and recommendation. The manager will determine the employee's minimum eligibility (i.e., length of service, performance evaluation rating, and PIP or final reprimand status). The manager will verify the course schedule does not conflict with the employee's work schedule or obligations. The manager will then submit the application and course schedule to the Department Head or Authorized Representative for final review of eligibility, job and/or career path relation, scheduling, and recommendation.

Upon review, recommendation, and signature, the Department Head or Authorized Representative will submit the completed application and course schedule to the Department of Talent Management for final approval prior to course start date. Requests submitted after the course start date will not be approved. The Department of Talent Management will verify the employee's eligibility, job, and/or career path relation and review their application and supporting documents prior to notifying all parties of the application approval status.

Reimbursement Criteria

Only courses approved in advance and completed with an earned grade of "C" or better in the class (or a "pass" for courses graded on a pass /fail basis) will be considered for reimbursement. Under no circumstance will reimbursement be issued for a failed course. Employees will submit requests for reimbursement no later than 90 days after the course end date.

Reimbursement Procedure

The employee must submit a receipt for expenses, a copy of their grade(s), and must have earned a "C" or better in the class (or a "pass" for courses graded on a pass /fail basis) for reimbursement. Upon receipt of the required documents, the Department of Talent Management will review and submit a check request to the Finance Department to process the employee tuition reimbursement. All disbursements of tuition reimbursement will be distributed by the Finance Department.

Separation of Employment

In the event an employee separates from the County for any reason other than Reduction in Force (RIF) within one (1) year of receiving tuition reimbursement, the employee is responsible for repayment of the reimbursement as outlined below:

1-90 calendar days of receiving educational assistance	100%
91-80 calendar days of receiving educational assistance	75%
81-270 calendar days of receiving educational assistance	50%
271-365 calendar days of receiving educational assistance	25%
365+ calendar days of receiving educational assistance	0%

Conditions & Limitations

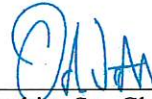
- I. **Position and/or Career Path Relevance:** The Rockdale County Educational Assistance Program is intended for permanent, full-time employees to pursue post-secondary education (undergraduate or graduate) directly related to their current position and/or career path. Courses not directly related to the employee's current position and/or career path will be reviewed by the Department of Talent Management on a case-by-case basis.
- II. **Course Completion Status:** The Rockdale County Educational Assistance Program will only reimburse employees tuition fees for courses completed with a grade of "C" or better in the class (or a "pass" for courses graded on a pass/fail basis). Rockdale County will not reimburse the employee for classes completed with a "D" or lower grade, official or unofficial withdrawals, and/or incompletes.
- III. **Loss of Program Eligibility:** Participation in the Rockdale County Education Assistance Program is a privilege of employment with Rockdale County. If, at any time during the employee's participation in the program, it is deemed by either the employee-manager, Department Head, or Authorized Representative that the employee fails to meet the minimum eligibility requirements, they will notify the Department of Talent Management as soon as possible. The employee's application will then be placed on a temporary hold until all eligibility issues can be rectified. If the employee fails to meet minimum eligibility requirements within 90 days of course completion, Rockdale County will not reimburse them for any course tuition or fees.

Policy Changes

The County reserves the right to delete, modify, amend or terminate this policy at any time, with or without prior notice.

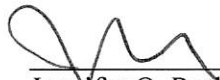
Approved this 27th day of August 2024

Rockdale County, Georgia
Board of Commissioners



Osborn Nesbitt, Sr., Chairman

ATTEST:



Jennifer O. Rutledge, County Clerk/
Executive Director of Government Affairs



**Board of Commissioners
Agenda Item Transmittal Form
Policy Transmittal Form**

Type of Request: New and Amended Employee Policies		County Clerk Use Only Policy #:
<input type="checkbox"/> Submission Information	<input type="checkbox"/> Information	
Contact Name: Chantall Hunt	Summary of Request: This request includes the adoption of five (5) new employee policies and the amendment of six (6) existing policies.	
Department: Talent Management		
<input type="checkbox"/> Department Director /Elected Official Signature	<input type="checkbox"/> Chief Operating Officer Signature	
I have reviewed the attached, and it is approved as to substance.	I have reviewed the attached, and it is approved for processing.	
Signature: <i>Kimberly Redd</i> Date: 8/21/24	Signature:	Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> County Attorney Signature	<input type="checkbox"/> Executive Director of Government Affairs/County Clerk Signature	
I have reviewed the attached, and it is approved as to form.	I have reviewed the attached, and it is approved for processing.	
Signature:	Signature:	Date:
Date:		

Notes and Comments:		
Title	Type	Policy Number
Rehabilitation Policy	New	
Severance Pay Policy	New	
Travel Per Diem & Mileage Policy	New	
Civility & Anti-Bullying Policy	New	
Bilingual Incentive Program Policy	New	
Fire and Rescue Incentive Pay Policy	Amendment to Existing	2017-4-33 (Amended 10/10/2017)
Disciplinary Procedures Policy	Amendment to Existing	2006-4-29 (Amended 12/8/2020)
Tuition Reimbursement Policy	Amendment to Existing	2006-4-2 (Amended 12/13/2022)
Drug & Alcohol Use Policy	Amendment to Existing	2018-4-22
Sick Leave Policy	Amendment to Existing	2022-4-40
Non-Discrimination & Anti-Harassment Policy	Amendment to Existing	2006-14-7 (Amended 12/10/2019)