

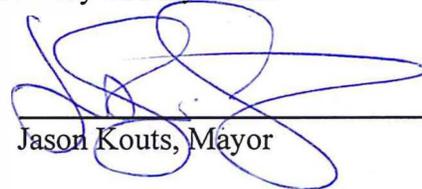
**RESOLUTION NUMBER R22-017**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAFFORD, GRAHAM COUNTY, ARIZONA APPROVING EDUCATION ASSISTANCE POLICY OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY MANUAL FOR CITY OF SAFFORD EMPLOYEES.**

**WHEREAS**, Policy Education Assistance, was established to outline the education assistance practices for City employees, see attached Education Assistance policy; and,

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Safford, that the City of Safford Human Resources Policy Manual is amended as follows; Education Assistance policy, all previous statements of policy Education Assistance are hereby rescinded and superseded by this resolution.

**PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED** by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Safford, Graham County, Arizona this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of May 2022.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jason Kouts, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tamara Webster, CMC  
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

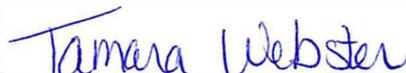
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William J. Sims, III  
Interim City Attorney

State of Arizona        )  
                                  ) ss  
County of Graham     )

CERTIFICATION

I HEREBY CERTIFY, that the foregoing Resolution Number R22-017 was duly passed and adopted by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Safford, Graham County, Arizona, at a regular council meeting held May 23, 2022 , and that a quorum was present at the meeting.

May 23, 2022  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tamara Webster, CMC, City Clerk

### **Purpose/Scope**

The City of Safford encourages its employees to improve their skills and knowledge, and to acquire the education necessary that will mutually benefit the City of Safford and the employee. The purpose of the Education Assistance Policy is to promote professional development for employees and to provide financial assistance for continued education opportunities. This is a shared responsibility between the employee and the City of Safford since the City of Safford will not be able to pay all costs in obtaining continued education. Education assistance is not an entitlement and shall be subject to the availability of funds.

### **Employee Eligibility**

Regular full-time employees are eligible if they satisfy all of the following criteria:

- Successfully completed one (1) year of employment
- Maintain a satisfactory rating on their annual performance evaluation. Employees who receive an unacceptable rating are not eligible to apply for education assistance until they receive a satisfactory rating.
- Part-time, temporary, seasonal or contractual employees are not eligible to receive education assistance.

### **Course Eligibility**

- Credit or non-credit courses at an accredited high school for GED, business school, community college, technical institute, college, university or other education source.
- Courses taken through an accredited college or university (including online coursework) to complete an Associates, Bachelor's or Master's degree.
- Course or exam taken for job-related vocational/professional certifications from a recognized and accepted association that's results in a license or certification.
- Approval for courses held during an employee's normal working hours will be reviewed to ensure there are no conflicts with work schedules and no overtime/comp-time will be accrued as a result of ability to perform their job. Employees may be allowed or required to adjust their work hours to fulfill their normal work hours per week. If work schedule does not allow for such flexibility, time away from work will be deducted without pay or the employee, with prior approval, may use accrued vacation.
- Training such as workshops, seminars, and conferences that provide "certificate of attendance" or "continuing education units" (CEU's) and courses in which credits do not contribute towards a degree (i.e., welding class, computer class) shall be handled through the training approval process and is not a part of the Education Assistance policy.

### **Approval Process**

Employees shall submit an "Education Assistance Approval Form" prior to enrolling in any course. This form shall be approved by the employee's supervisor and Department Head. This form will be retained on file with Human Resources and the employee will be notified if the request was approved or denied. If the approval is not submitted prior to enrolling in a course, it will not be eligible for education assistance.

**Reimbursement Process**

Eligible employees may be reimbursed academic costs charged by the academic source where enrolled through the check request process and must be accompanied with an Education Assistance Completion Form. Academic costs are defined as charges assessed by an academic source to every person enrolling for the course. These charges are required of everyone and are neither negotiable nor discretionary for the individual enrolling in the course. Academic costs include tuition, fees and course/lab fees and textbooks. The total maximum education assistance amount is up to \$5,250 per fiscal year, July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>, per employee (this amount is in accordance with the Internal Revenue Service Tax Code which allows for tax-free exemption of employer provided educational assistance). Non-reimbursable expenses include expenses for meals, lodging, transportation, tools or supplies (other than textbooks) that you can keep after completing the course of instruction. Employees are required to disclose if any other financial assistance is being received through grants, scholarships, loans, VA benefits, etc.

**Completion Process**

Upon completion of an approved course, the employee must submit an Education Assistance Completion Form along with an official grade report. Course completion is defined as attaining appropriate grades (a “C” or better or pass, in the case of pass/fail). The aforementioned required documents must be submitted to Human Resources no later than thirty (30) calendar days following the completion of the course in order to be properly reimbursed and to eligible for future participation in the Education Assistance Program.

**Employee Obligation**

Employee will agree to participate in and pursue the agreed upon degree or certification to the best of their ability and to use reasonable efforts to complete the program. Employee will have no obligation to pay employer for payment installments made toward Education Assistance unless employee fails to obtain the agreed upon degree or certification in a timely manner. If the employee does not complete the agreed upon degree or certification in a timely manner, the employee shall immediately pay, without demand, an amount equal to that installment payment and all later installment payments in the following manner:

Time Elapsed from Program Completion Date or Last Completed Course(s)	Percentage of Repayment Applicable to Education Assistance Reimbursement (Amount Received Prior to Termination)
12 months or less	100%
More than 12 months, but less than 24 months	75%
More than 24 months, but less than 36 months	50%
More than 36 months, but less than 48 months	25%

### **Set-off Against Final Paycheck.**

To the extent allowed by law, if the Employee terminates employment and reimbursement is required under this policy, or if reimbursement is required due to the Employee failing to timely obtain certification, the City of Safford may deduct the amount of any Education Assistance reimbursement from any compensation due and owing to Employee at time of separation from employment, which in the case of a reimbursement arising out of the Employee's termination may be pursuant to a payment plan.

### **Employee Transfers and Separations**

If an employee transfers to another department and subsequently completes an approved course, the employee shall submit a request for reimbursement to the employing department. The employing department is responsible for processing the request per the provisions of this procedure, and providing reimbursement if funds are available. Employees who separate from employment prior to the completion of the course are not eligible for reimbursement. If an employee has been approved for educational assistance and employment is terminated by reason of Reduction in Force (i.e., layoff), the City of Safford may honor its reimbursement commitment. However, if an employee's separation date is prior to the beginning of the course, the City of Safford is not obligated to reimburse the employee. If the course work has not yet started when the "layoff" notice is delivered, the approval will be cancelled.

If an employee who has received financial assistance under this program separates from City of Safford employment for any reason (other than reduction in force, i.e., layoff) within 24 months after receiving reimbursement, the total amount will need reimbursed to the City of Safford within 6 months of separation date. The employee and the Finance department will work out a payment plan to include the first payment back to the City of Safford from the employee's final paycheck.

### **No Guarantee of Employment**

Nothing in the Education Assistance policy constitutes a commitment or guarantee on the part of the City of Safford to provide employment to Employee for any specific period of time or duration. Unless otherwise provided in writing, employment shall remain "at-will."

### **Records/Forms**

All records/forms shall be maintained by the Human Resources Department and a copy will be filed in the "Employee File."

- Education Assistance Approval Form
- Education Assistance Affidavit
- Education Assistance Completion Form
- Official Grade Report provided by employee