



County of Ashe

Educational Benefits Policy

Adopted Date:

Date of Last Review:

Purpose

The Educational Benefits Policy is offered to encourage employees to pursue advanced training and other professional enrichment programs that will improve job performance and/or will prepare them for advancement opportunities within County of Ashe (hereafter referred to as the "County") departments.

These benefits will allow the County the ability to develop its workforce and will provide the means for the County to support continuing education activities. These educational activities must directly relate to the County's mission, vision, and goals.

County of Ashe Training/Development

The County Manager shall accept recommendations from department heads for relevant training of personnel, and at his/her discretion, approve programs, that will gain the maximum benefit for both the County and the employee. Employees attending training activities/programs should do so with the intent of increasing their knowledge and skills for the purposes of achieving excellence in the performance of their job. The County Manager is responsible for ensuring that all employees receive appropriate and relevant training and information necessary to fulfill the requirements of their positions.

Certain training is mandatory for designated employees. Department heads will have the responsibility of scheduling their employees' attendance for mandatory training. The County shall pay the entire cost of institutes, workshops, courses or seminars, etc., for mandatory training. An employee, who cannot or does not desire to maintain the skills level needed to perform his/her job, shall be subject to termination of employment. Specific job training may be for certification in a specific subject. If the County makes an investment of \$1,000 or more in specific job training and the employee voluntarily resigns, repayment of the training costs will be required. If an employee is involuntarily terminated, repayment of the training costs may be required. The reimbursement balance for tuition and books will be deducted from the employee's final paycheck if the amount is available or be paid directly to the County by the employee within 90 days.

If an employee receives training from the County and the employee voluntarily resigns, the employee will be required to pay back the County using the following schedule:

- Leaves within 12 months of receiving training - 100% payback
- Leaves between 13-24 months of receiving training - 80% payback
- Leaves between 25-36 months of receiving training - 60% payback
- Leaves between 37-48 months of receiving training - 40% payback
- Leaves between 49-60 months of receiving training - 20% payback

Trainings may include, but are not limited to: schools, workshops, seminars, continuing education classes, and on-the-job training.

Department heads are urged to maintain a positive work environment conducive for development and training of personnel. It is important that supervisors encourage an employee's initiative to make training suggestions or requests for his/her development that would be in the best interest of the County.

Reimbursable expenses for County training may include registration or tuition fees, books, meals, transportation and/or lodging expenses for job-related training sessions, seminars, workshops, and/or continuing education courses which enhance the employee's skills as related to their position with the County. Grants are not considered reimbursable expenses under this Policy.

Voluntary Employee Training & Educational Reimbursement

With the prior approval of the employee's department head and the County Manager, a full-time employee with one (1) consecutive year of creditable service with the County may receive educational assistance in the amount of \$1,500 per fiscal year for a course of study related to the employee's position or advancement opportunity with the County.

The County will provide reimbursement for the cost incurred for tuition and textbooks associated with voluntary training and development that an employee may pursue on his/her own time.

These voluntary courses or degree programs should be related to the employee's position and/or potential future positions. The course work should be chosen to specifically broaden and enhance the employee's knowledge and abilities in performance of his/her duties.

Educational reimbursement will only be provided when an employee:

- 1) Has been employed with the County for a minimum of one (1) consecutive year
- 2) Has not received any former disciplinary action in the previous year, at time of request
- 3) Makes a written request, in advance, with specific courses and/or training outlines
- 4) Receives prior approval from their department head and County Manager
- 5) Receives a passing grade
- 6) Enrolls in classes with an accredited educational institution

Employees requesting educational reimbursement must sign a written agreement which defines their plan of study and expected date of completion. The agreement shall also have the reimbursement submission deadline outlined for clarity. The employee must also agree to retain their employment with the County for a minimum of one (1) year after reimbursement.

Employees requesting educational reimbursement must submit a written request to their department head prior to the start of any class/training. The department head shall inform the County Manager and Human Resources Coordinator of the request. A determination shall be made as to whether the course(s) or program(s) meet the requirements for reimbursement. The employee will be notified of the decision as soon as possible, in order for him/her to enroll timely. If a degree program is approved for reimbursement, all courses associated with that program shall be considered for reimbursement.

Employees will have up to thirty (30) days after receiving grades/certificates of completion to submit receipts for reimbursement. Reimbursement shall be made to the employee by the County following the receipt of a grade from the school. The employee shall provide copies of receipts for tuition and textbooks to the Human Resources Coordinator, along with a copy of the grade sheet once the course(s) is/are completed.

The full amount of educational reimbursement shall be processed upon successful course completion with course credits achieved.

No reimbursement shall be made for failed coursework that results in no course credits being achieved.

If an employee receives reimbursement for educational benefits from the County and then leaves the County, the employee will be required to pay back the County using the following schedule:

- Leaves within 12 months of receiving educational benefit - 100% payback
- Leaves between 13-24 months of receiving educational benefit - 80% payback
- Leaves between 25-36 months of receiving educational benefit - 60% payback
- Leaves between 37-48 months of receiving educational benefit - 40% payback
- Leaves between 49-60 months of receiving educational benefit - 20% payback

The reimbursement balance will be deducted from the employee's final paycheck if the amount is available or be paid directly to the County by the employee within 90 days.

An employee whose employment is terminated during enrollment because of a reduction in force or elimination of the job, or who is unable to complete the course because of a transfer within the County, shall be reimbursed for the full amount of the costs incurred up to the date of the termination or transfer. An employee who voluntarily leaves the County or is terminated for cause prior to completing a course shall not be reimbursed for the expenses associated with the course.

The County Manager shall have the authority to rescind any reimbursement, with due notice to the employee, should a serious personnel problem develop with that employee.

Employee participation in educational programs will be filed in their personnel file and will be weighed when an employee is considered for advancement. The approval of educational reimbursement and successful completion of approved educational programs will not guarantee advancement.

Determination for whether a course is directly related to the employee's current position, or advancement opportunity, is at the discretion of the department head and County Manager and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Aptitude, past training records, job performance and attitude, as well as the employee's desire and willingness to commit himself/herself to achieve ultimate results from the training/coursework, shall be carefully considered prior to approval of the educational benefit.



County of Ashe Educational Benefits Policy Agreement & Acknowledgment

I have read and been informed about the content, requirements, and expectations of the County of Ashe Educational Benefits Policy. I have received a copy of the policy and agree to abide by the policy guidelines. I understand the terms of when reimbursing the County for educational expenses would apply. I also understand that the level of reimbursement will vary depending on the final grades that are submitted to the Human Resources Coordinator.

The full amount of educational reimbursement shall be processed upon successful course completion with course credits achieved.

If an employee receives reimbursement in the amount of \$1,000 or greater for educational benefits and/or trainings from the County and then leaves the County, the employee will be required to pay back the County using the following schedule:

- Leaves within 12 months of receiving benefit - 100% payback
- Leaves between 13-24 months of receiving benefit - 80% payback
- Leaves between 25-36 months of receiving benefit - 60% payback
- Leaves between 37-48 months of receiving benefit - 40% payback
- Leaves between 49-60 months of receiving benefit - 20% payback

The reimbursement balance will be deducted from my final paycheck if the amount is available or be paid directly to the County by me within 90 days.

I understand that if I have questions, at any time, regarding the educational policy, I will consult with my Department Head or the Human Resources Coordinator.

Employee Name (Print) _____

Employee Signature _____

Date _____

Department Head _____

Date _____

County Manager _____

Asst Finance Officer _____

Date _____

Date _____

Notarization of Employee's Signature

State of _____

County of _____

I, _____, a notary public for said State and County, do hereby
certify that _____, personally appeared before me this date and
acknowledge the due execution of this form.

Witness my hand and official seal this the _____ day of _____, 20 _____.

Signature of Notary _____

My Commission Expires _____

Employee Coursework Information

Employee Name: _____

Educational Institution: _____

Anticipated Degree/Certificate: _____

List of Anticipated Courses:

Anticipated Beginning Date: _____

Anticipated Date of Completion: _____