



Tuition Reimbursement for Employee-Initiated Education or Training Policy

Policy # HR021
Effective:

Policy Owner: Director, Office of Human Resources

Policy Contact: Training and Development Manager

Policy Statement

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Tuition Reimbursement Program allows tuition reimbursement and/or time release for employee-initiated education or training. This policy provides the rules and requirements for tuition reimbursement and/or time release.

Tuition reimbursement and/or time release for employee-initiated education or training is based on the availability of funds and organizational need. Total reimbursement per employee shall not exceed the tuition reimbursement and time release limits for undergraduate and graduate coursework per fiscal year as identified in the [MnDOT Training Guidelines](#).

In exchange for tuition reimbursement/time release, the employee agrees to remain employed at MnDOT for 12 months following course completion or the employee is obligated to re-pay MnDOT 100% of all reimbursed tuition expenses incurred, and/or the value of hours granted for time release, in the last 12 months of employment. The obligation to re-pay MnDOT is effective for courses approved for tuition reimbursement/time release after _____. IRS tax rules will apply. The Director of Human Resources may eliminate or reduce the amount of repayment owed by the employee for extenuating circumstances.

An employee must supply evidence of tuition payment and successful course completion before MnDOT provides tuition reimbursement. An employee shall not be reimbursed for coursework completed prior to obtaining required approvals.

Reason for Policy

MnDOT's Tuition Reimbursement for Employee-Initiated Education or Training Policy exists to allow employees an opportunity to further their education, develop or acquire skills, or increase knowledge in areas beneficial to MnDOT. Secondary benefits include increased employee retention and increased ability to attract and hire qualified employees.

Policies regarding employee training and development follow applicable administrative procedures, IRS tax laws, and the provisions of collective bargaining agreements and plans.

Applicability

All MnDOT employees must comply with MnDOT policies.

Key stakeholders affected by this policy include:

- Employees eligible to use the Tuition Reimbursement Program
- Managers and Supervisors
- Training Representatives

Definitions

Eligible Employees

Permanent, non-probationary, classified employees with satisfactory work performance, working full-time or part-time.

Note: Requests for exceptions to eligibility may be made in writing to the Director of Human Resources.

Employee-Initiated (Non-Job Assigned) Education or Training

Education or training that is discretionary in nature and not required by the employer.

MnDOT Shortage Occupation List

A list of occupations that is reviewed and amended annually based on current job market conditions.

MnDOT Training Guidelines

Guidance on training-related activities to ensure consistency in training administration across the department.

Successful Completion of a Course

Completion of a course with a grade of C or better (2.0 - 4.0 on a GPA points scale), satisfactory, or passing.

Time Release

Authorized leave from the worksite, up to 100 hours per fiscal year, granted to eligible MnDOT employees during normal working hours for employee-initiated education or training. Release includes time spent attending class and necessary travel time to and from the course site.

Time Release Recovery

Repayment of the value of hours granted for employee-initiated education or training.

Tuition Reimbursement

Funds reimbursed to eligible MnDOT employees to cover the cost of tuition for pre-approved employee-initiated education or training following the successful completion of a course, at a rate up to 75%.

Note: Reimbursement may be granted to eligible employees in an amount up to 100% of the tuition cost for coursework that enables an employee to meet the minimum qualifications for a degree in a position identified on the MnDOT shortage occupation list.

Tuition Reimbursement Recovery

Repayment of funds already disbursed for employee-initiated education or training.

Web-Based / Distance / Online Learning

A delivery method that uses the Internet as an instructional tool without the student's need to attend in-person.

Limitations

- Reimbursement for employee-initiated education or training is based on availability of funds and organizational need.
- Tuition reimbursement or time release for permanent, part-time employees shall be prorated based on the percentage of hours worked during a typical pay period.
- Reimbursement is limited to tuition, which includes online course fees for web-based / distance / online learning.
- Study abroad programs are not eligible for tuition reimbursement.
- Unsatisfactory completion of a course while using time release may result in denial of future requests.
- To be eligible for tuition reimbursement/time release, web-based / distance / online learning courses must be from a college or university accredited by a regional or national accrediting agency recognized by the [U.S. Department of Education](#).
- Employee may request both tuition reimbursement and time release during the same term but **not** for the same course (to receive both tuition reimbursement and time release, employee must be taking at least 2 courses – tuition reimbursement for one and time release for the other).
- An employee agrees that in exchange for tuition reimbursement/time release, the employee will remain employed at MnDOT for a minimum of 12 full months after completion of a course. Employees who remain for more than 12 months have no obligation to reimburse MnDOT for tuition reimbursement/time release received. An employee who voluntarily leaves employment within 12 full calendar months of completing a course must reimburse MnDOT 100% of all reimbursed tuition expenses incurred, or the value of hours granted for time release, in the last 12 months of employment.

Responsibilities

Employee

- Obtain approval for education or training from supervisor and manager **BEFORE** the start of course(s).
- Maintain satisfactory work performance in position at MnDOT while completing coursework eligible for tuition reimbursement/time release.
- Follow Tuition Reimbursement/Time Release Procedures.

Supervisor/Manager

- Ensure that a current Performance Review has been completed and that employee's performance is at least satisfactory.
- Review and approve or deny requests for tuition reimbursement and/or time release and recommend rate of reimbursement.
- Notify Training Representative of approval for education or training reimbursement/time release PRIOR to the start of course(s) to finalize paperwork.
- Notify Training Representative when an employee who has received tuition reimbursement/time release within the previous 12 months is leaving MnDOT.
- Follow Tuition Reimbursement/Time Release Procedures.

Training Representative

- Review and process tuition reimbursement/time release requests applying the criteria established in this policy and the Tuition Reimbursement/Time Release Procedures.
- Authorize tuition reimbursement payments upon receipt of required documentation following course completion.
- Document tuition reimbursement/time release in MnDOT's Learning Management System.
- Maintain tuition reimbursement/time release records for the District/Office.
- Work with the Human Resources Director to determine the amount of repayment an employee owes if the employee leaves MnDOT within 12 months of receiving tuition reimbursement/time release.
- Work with the Office of Financial Management to recover funds, when applicable.

Policy Owner (Director, Office of Human Resources)

- Review policy every 2 years, or sooner as necessary, to ensure policy remains up-to-date.
- Ensure processes, procedures, forms, and instructions associated with policy remain current.
- Work with Policy Coordinator to revise policy and/or confirm its accuracy.
- Communicate new policies as well as revisions, reviews, and retirements to stakeholders.

Resources & Related Information

Forms

- Tuition Reimbursement Education Plan
- Employee Registration For Tuition Reimbursement/Time Release Form

Processes, Procedures, and Instructions

- Tuition Reimbursement/Time Release Procedures
- [iHUB "Tuition Reimbursement How To"](#)

Resources

- [MnDOT Training Guidelines](#)
- [MMB Administrative Procedure 21](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education](#)
- [Internal Revenue Service – Employer's Tax Guide to Fringe Benefits](#)
- Business Data Catalog (BDC) – accessible from employee Intranet
- MnDOT's [Policy Website](#)

History & Updates

Title: *Tuition Reimbursement for Employee-Initiated Training Policy (2020)*

Revision	Date	Comments
Initial Adoption	06/30/1993	Tuition Reimbursement policy transferred the approval and funding of tuition reimbursement from the Finance and Administration Division to districts, offices, and divisions.
1 st Revision	03/22/1996	Policy revision addressed issues of allowable amount of reimbursement, public versus private institution costs, and eligibility of unclassified employees to receive tuition reimbursement and was developed in accordance with the 1995 revisions to the Department of Employee Relations Administrative Procedure 21.

Revision	Date	Comments
2 nd Revision	8/1/2000	No data available.
3 rd Revision	10/23/2001	The policy didn't distinguish between private and public institution rates so it placed a maximum limit on the amount of reimbursement one could receive on an annual basis, allowed for a pro rata reimbursement for part-time employees, and allowed for up to 100% reimbursement for training in occupations identified as areas of shortage in MnDOT.
4 th Revision	10/24/2005	Policy updates addressed web-based/distance learning courses and refers to the annual statewide training guidelines for minimum qualifications for identified MnDOT occupational shortage positions and for maximum reimbursement amounts allowed per fiscal year.
5 th Revision		Policy rewritten in new policy template and procedures separated from policy. Language added that refers to employee obligation to remain with MnDOT for a minimum of 12 months following final tuition reimbursement payment otherwise repayment is required. Language added to clarify limitations.

Authorization

Policy Owner:

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Governance Committee has reviewed this policy and recommends approval:

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Responsible Senior Officer:

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Policy Review

This policy has been reviewed by the Policy Owner, the policy content is current, and no significant modifications are needed. Minor modifications have been noted in the "Comments" section.

Date	Policy Owner Signature	Comments