Ohio Department of Administrative Services
John Kasich, *Governor*
Robert Blair, *Director*

OhioDAS

State of Ohio Administrative Policy

No: Human Resources **HR-36**

Effective: July 1, 2013

Issued By: Robert Blair, Director

Employee Development Funds for the State Council of Professional Educators OEA/NEA

1.0 Purpose

To administer the Employee Development Funds for qualifying State Council of Professional Educators (SCOPE) OEA/NEA employees in Bargaining Unit 10 pursuant to Section 10.03 of the collective bargaining agreement and governed by this policy.

2.0 Policy

The State of Ohio and SCOPE OEA/NEA mutually recognize that benefits accrue both to the agencies and to their employees through participation in coursework that provides academic college credit; continuing education activities, including attendance at professional conferences, seminars, and workshops; enrollment in educational programs; maintaining licensure and certification; and by obtaining continuing education units (CEUs) required in many disciplines. Financial assistance is on reimbursement basis only.

2.1 **Employee Eligibility:** To be eligible for reimbursement from this fund, the employee must:

- be an employee in Bargaining Unit 10, represented by SCOPE OEA/NEA;
- be paid directly by warrant of the director of the Office of Budget and Management;
- be in an active pay status defined as not being on partial or full-time disability leave, workers' compensation leave, administrative leave or other leave of absence except approved education leave at the beginning of the educational activity; and,
- still employed by the State of Ohio when the final reimbursement paperwork is submitted.

2.1.1 Employees who separate employment due to a layoff and who were preapproved and started the class/event will be reimbursed if all other requirements are met.

2.2 **Eligible Course and Events:** Courses and events for which employees may seek reimbursement are expected to provide knowledge and/or skills, which could reasonably be expected to relate to any of the major job classifications currently used in the State of Ohio. These major job classifications are listed in the Classification Specifications Manual that is posted on the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), Human Resources Division, Workforce Administration web page at the link below.

http://das.ohio.gov/Divisions/HumanResources/WorkforceAdministration/ClassificationandCompensation/ClassificationSpecifications.aspx

2.2.1 **Tuition Reimbursement**

To be eligible for tuition reimbursement, all of the following criteria must be met:

- Coursework must provide academic college credit.
- Coursework, including distance education courses or other online courses, must be:
  - provided by an accredited college or university named in the U.S. Department of Education's Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs located at http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Search.aspx.
- If grades are given, the employee must attain a "C" or better, or receive a "pass" if assessed on a pass/fail basis.
- Electives and prerequisites must be part of a degree program.
- An online course must be completed within eighteen (18) months of the start date.

2.2.2 **Reimbursement for Professional Development Events**

To be eligible for reimbursement, events must be one of the following:

- Seminars, workshops, conferences, or professional development training;
- Courses preparing for or leading to licensure or certification;
- Courses offering continuing education units required to maintain licensure in many disciplines;

- Work skills or computer/technical skills training; or
- An online course that offers continuing education units (CEUs) or a certificate of completion and is completed within eighteen (18) months of the start date.

2.2.3 Participants may not use reimbursement for the exact same event more than once per fiscal year.

2.3 **Reimbursement Eligibility and Limits:**

2.3.1 Subject to the limitations of the SCOPE OEA/NEA Fund, each employee has a personal cap of $8,000 for the duration of the contract and a cap of $3,500 in any one fiscal year for tuition reimbursement, seminars, workshops, or conferences.

2.3.2 The cost of books associated with an approved course is eligible for reimbursement. Taxes or fees for shipping and handling are not eligible for reimbursement.

2.3.3 The funds are encumbered in the same fiscal year as the start date of the course or event regardless of when reimbursement is requested or when preapproval is received.

2.3.4 Disbursement of funds is contingent upon the availability of funds.

2.3.5 The employee's status (e.g. SCOPE OEA/NEA employee, exempt, etc.) on the date the request is submitted determines the fund from which the reimbursement will come.

- If an employee submits a preapproval request, the employee's funding limit is based on the employee's current employee status (e.g. SCOPE OEA/NEA, exempt, etc.) as of the preapproval request submittal date.
- When the employee submits an application and reimbursement request simultaneously, the employee's funding limit is based on the employee's current employee status as of the application and reimbursement request submittal date.

2.4 **Expenses that are not eligible for reimbursement, include but are not limited to:**

- Any non-instructional fees (e.g. application fees, registration fees, drop or late fees, graduation fees, parking fees, non-instructional field trips, flight instruction airtime fees, and other related expenses)
- Travel expenses (e.g. parking, travel, food or lodging expenses)

- Fees for licenses or certifications, testing or examination fees
- Hardware or commercial software fees
- Equipment
- Memberships
- Subscriptions for periodicals or software
- Reimbursement is not available for courses/events that are paid for completely by scholarship, grants or agencies.

2.5 **Application Preapproval:**

2.5.1 To determine in advance whether a program qualifies for reimbursement, employees **may** submit their *EDF Application for Reimbursement* early. Preapproval of applications for tuition reimbursement and event reimbursement is **optional.**

2.5.2 For an application to be preapproved, it must be entered into the online EDF application system before the course/event start date.

2.5.3 For courses or events that begin in the next fiscal year, employees cannot submit their application before **May 1** of the current fiscal year.

2.5.4 If the pre-approved course or event is cancelled or rescheduled more than thirty (30) business days from the original scheduled date, the application pre-approval is void. Preapproved applications cannot be transferred to a different course or event.

2.5.5 Employees must submit reimbursement documents within **sixty (60) calendar days** from the end date of the course or event or the preapproval will expire and the encumbered funds returned to the employee's fund account.

2.6 **Application for Reimbursement:**

2.6.1 Unless otherwise noted, employees shall apply for reimbursement within **sixty (60) calendar days** of the completion of the course or event, including preapproved courses and events. Employees shall provide the following documentation:

- A completed online *EDF Application for Reimbursement* form (unless the form was previously submitted and the course/event was preapproved)
- Proof of cost of activity

- Proof of payment of activity cost
- Proof of attendance
  - For tuition reimbursement, proof of attendance must be the grade received, including pass/fail. Electronic grade documentation is sufficient if it is from the registrar of the institution.

Please refer to the EDF Reimbursement checklist, http://das.ohio.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=5R6xysTwCpE%3d&tabid=733, for explanations and examples of the required documentation.

2.6.2 The Office of Learning and Professional Development staff may request additional documentation, if needed, such as a brochure or other description of the course or event.

2.6.3 All complete and accurate applications, including applications that are submitted for preapproval, will be approved on a first come, first serve basis provided funds are available.

2.6.4 If an employee submits an application that is incomplete or has errors, the employee will be notified via email and offered an opportunity to correct the problem. The email will explain what information is missing and will indicate that the application will be denied until the missing information is provided or any errors are corrected.

2.6.5 Once a complete and accurate application has been submitted, DAS will make every effort to respond within 72 hours.

2.7 **Reimbursement:**

Reimbursement will be included in the employee's biweekly paycheck.

2.8 **Appeal of Decision:**

2.8.1 Any employee who has been denied approval for use of EDF funds or reimbursement may appeal to the manager of the Employee Development Fund. An appeal form is available on the EDF website. If the appeal is denied by the manager, the employee may appeal to the Deputy Director of the Department of Administrative Services' Human Resources Division. The Deputy Director's decision will be final.

2.8.2 Any grievance involving denial of reimbursement for the SCOPE OEA/NEA Fund should be sent to DAS/Office of Collective Bargaining for review.

3.0 Authority

ORC § 124.86; Section 10.03 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the State of Ohio and SCOPE OEA/NEA (effective July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2015)

This policy supersedes any previously issued directive or policy and will remain effective until canceled or superseded.

4.0 Revision History

Date	Description of Change
07/01/2013	Last issue date.
07/01/2014	Scheduled policy review.

5.0 Inquiries

Inquiries regarding the Tuition Reimbursement, Seminar and Conference Fund may be directed to the employee's union steward, Labor Relations Coordinator or the Employee Development Funds staff.

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State of Ohio Administrative Policies may be found online at
www.das.ohio.gov/forStateAgencies/Policies.aspx

Appendix A - Resources

Document Name
The online application system may be accessed at edf.ohio.gov.