



South Dakota Legislative Research Council Academic Assistance Program

Purpose

The purpose of the Academic Assistance Program is to allow payment for a course of study related to succession planning and employee development. It provides a tool for managers and employees to support academic activities that directly relate to the organization's identified knowledge, skills, and behaviors (organizational competencies), and which support the mission of the Legislative Research Council. The academic assistance program is not an employee benefit, right or entitlement; it is a management tool for succession planning and employee development. The academic assistance program provides reimbursement of academic costs if funds are available at the agency level within the base budget.

Eligibility

Employees must be employed in a permanent, benefited position and have completed six months of permanent employment with the Legislative Research Council.

Requests

Requests for academic assistance must be approved by the employee's supervisor and the Director prior to payment. The request must contain the employee's name, a justification for providing academic assistance, including an explanation of the benefit to the Legislative Research Council, the number of credit hours in the program, and the estimated total costs proposed for reimbursement.

Academic Sources

Accredited courses of study or advanced degrees from accredited colleges/universities via traditional classroom, video-based, distance learning, web based, and e-learning are eligible for approval. The coursework must provide academic credit.

Approval

Academic assistance shall not be approved in areas where management has determined that either the course of study or degree is not of benefit to the Legislative Research Council. The improved knowledge, skills, and abilities gained by the employee should prepare the individual for potential job duties. Management may consider workforce planning, succession planning, and career development in approving employees to receive academic assistance. Preference will be given to employees identified as potential successors to higher level positions.

Educational Criteria

- Provide knowledge and skills directly related to the mission of the Legislative Research Council.
- Directly related to current or future workforce needs.
- Deemed beneficial to both the Legislative Research Council and the employee.
- Completion of the program should have a direct benefit to the organization.

Employee Criteria

- Six months of continuous service in a permanent, benefited position.
 - Potential for remaining in the Legislative Research Council once coursework is completed.
 - Ability to grow into and contribute in higher level positions.
 - Capability of employee to successfully complete coursework and apply newly acquired knowledge and skills.
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Leave

Attending classes or doing required coursework is not considered work time.

Amount Eligible

Eligible employees may be reimbursed up to seventy-five percent of educational (tuition and fees) costs, excluding costs for textbooks and lab fees. The reimbursement for out of state tuition costs shall be based on seventy-five percent of the in-state, public tuition rate, as long as a similar course of study is offered at state universities.

Academic Grade

Eligible employees shall receive reimbursement of approved tuition costs upon submitting evidence of satisfactory completion of a pre-approved course. Completion is defined as "Satisfactory," "Pass," or a grade of "B" or better. An "Incomplete" shall not be reimbursed until a final grade is issued.

Commit to Service

In the event the employee fails to make progress, for a period of one year, toward completing the course of study as set out above, the employee shall reimburse the Legislative Research Council for the full amount reimbursed to the employee under this agreement, within 30 days of the demand for reimbursement.

In the event the employee's employment with the Legislative Research Council terminates prior to the employee completing their course of study, the employee shall be responsible for reimbursing the Legislative Research Council for the full amount reimbursed under this agreement.

If the employee completes the course of study while still employed with the Legislative Research Council, the employee agrees to remain employed with the Legislative Research Council for a period of two years after completion. If the employee remains employed with the Legislative Research Council for two years, all obligations of the employee under this agreement shall be fulfilled. If the employee's employment terminates with the Legislative Research Council prior to the end of that two-year period, the employee shall reimburse the Legislative Research Council based on the number of months employed with the Legislative Research Council following receipt of their degree as follows:

- 0-6 months: The employee shall reimburse 100% of the funds.
- 6-12 months: The employee shall reimburse 75% of the funds.
- 12-18 months: The employee shall reimburse 50% of the funds.
- 18-24 months: The employee shall reimburse 25% of the funds.

The Legislative Research Council shall have the right to recoup any amount owed by the employee from any amounts owed to the employee at the time of termination and said amount may be deducted from the employee's final pay check and unused annual or sick leave and any remaining balance shall be due within 30 days after termination.

The employee shall have no obligation to reimburse the Legislative Research Council in the event the employee is terminated as the result of a layoff.