



**Governor's Office of  
Employee Relations**



**Workshop and Seminar  
Reimbursement Program  
for  
PEF-represented Employees**

**Program Guidelines  
for  
January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016**

# Workshop and Seminar Reimbursement Program

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# WORKSHOP AND SEMINAR REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

## A. Program Description

The Workshop and Seminar Reimbursement (WSR) Program reimburses eligible Public Employees Federation (PEF)-represented employees for attendance at non-credit bearing professional development courses, workshops, conferences, and seminars given by accredited providers. WSR enables employees to improve job-related skills in their profession, and gain the knowledge and skills necessary for career mobility and promotional opportunities within New York State service.

## B. Funding and Oversight

Funding for WSR is provided through Article 15 of the 2015-2016 Agreement between the State of New York and PEF. Article 15 also establishes the Professional Development Committee (PDC) consisting of two designees from the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) and two from PEF. The PDC has adopted these WSR guidelines and monitors the administration of this program.

## C. Program Highlights

- Provides reimbursement to current PEF-represented employees for qualifying conferences, workshops, seminars, and non-credit bearing courses by accredited providers **that begin on or after January 1, 2016 and run through December 31, 2016.**
- Maximum reimbursement is \$1,250 for the period January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016.
- Reimbursement requires successful completion of a non-credit course, workshop, or event. WSR will not cover incomplete or failed courses or events.
- All applications must be submitted within 60 days after the end date of the course. The postmark, email date, or fax date will be used to determine the timeliness of the application.
- Applications for courses or events that began on or after January 1, 2016 and ended prior to June 9, 2016 must be submitted by August 8, 2016.
- **The Office of the State Comptroller will withhold estimated taxes at the end of each calendar year from employees whose benefits from this program and any additional educational benefits from their agency exceed \$5,250.**
- WSR can only be used for non-credit bearing courses, workshops, and seminars as detailed in the guidelines.

## D. Employee Eligibility

Applicants are eligible to participate in the WSR Program under the following conditions:

### 1. *Current PEF-Represented Employees*

At both the start and completion dates of the course, the applicant must:

- be actively employed in a PEF-represented position; and
- be a New York State or Roswell Park Cancer Institute employee with attendance rules coverage who is either full- or part-time (working 50 percent or more).

### 2. *Laid Off Employees*

A New York State or Roswell Park Cancer Institute employee is eligible for reimbursement if the applicant:

- has been laid off;
- has not been rehired by New York State or Roswell Park in a PEF-represented position; and
- is on the appropriate Civil Service or Roswell Park Preferred List.

To be eligible for reimbursement, the course or event date must be within 12 months of the layoff date. The applicant must provide documentation showing that date and preferred list standing. The documentation must be signed by a personnel officer and sent as an attachment with other supporting documentation.

### 3. *Half-Time Employees and Employees on Full-Time Non-Disciplinary Leave*

A New York State or Roswell Park Cancer Institute employee, represented by PEF, who works less than 50 percent, and those on full-time non-disciplinary leave, shall receive 50 percent of the benefit with proper documentation. Documentation must specify the start and end dates and reason for the leave. It also must show the employee's bargaining unit, agency code, and the initial appointment date to state service. The documentation must be signed by a personnel officer and sent as an attachment with other supporting documentation. Eligibility will be based on work status on the start date of the course or event.

### 4. *Seasonal Employees, Student Interns, and Student Assistants*

Seasonal employees, student interns, and student assistants are not eligible for this benefit unless they are entitled to earn vacation accruals prior to the start date of the course or event. Such employees must provide documentation of their eligibility to earn and use vacation accruals. It must be signed by a personnel officer and sent as an attachment with other supporting documentation.

## E. Course Eligibility

WSR reimburses employees for registration (attendance) fees for workshops, seminars or conferences, or for costs (not including any additional fees) for non-credit bearing courses at accredited institutions, schools, or organizations.

### 1. *Job-Related or Career-Related*

Workshops, seminars, conferences, and non-credit bearing courses must be job-related or career-related.

A *job-related* workshop, seminar, conference, or non-credit bearing course directly relates to the employee's current profession or job assignments, duties, and responsibilities.

A *career-related* workshop, seminar, conference, or non-credit bearing course provides the employee with the knowledge, skills, or abilities to increase opportunity for career mobility and/or advancement within their current profession or in a career path for which there currently exists a need in New York State government, such as nursing and accounting.

**The PDC maintains sole discretion for making the final determination on whether a training is eligible for reimbursement. Documentation may be requested from the applicant's supervisor to assist in determining eligibility.**

### 2. *Eligible Course Categories*

Eligible workshops, seminars, conferences, or non-credit bearing courses—taken in person or online—must fit into one of the following categories:

- Licensing exam preparatory and refresher courses if the license is required for continued employment with New York State or advancement within the employee's current state profession/career.
- Continuing education courses if they are required for continued licensure, certification, or state employment; or provide professional development within the employee's current state profession or career. Online continuing legal education (CLE) courses are offered at no charge to PEF-represented employees through the Public Service Workshops Program (PSWP). For further details, visit <http://pswp.info/CourseOfferings.cfm>. Under the WSR program, employees also may request reimbursement for individual CLE courses offered by approved providers (e.g., the American Bar Association and Albany Law School).
- Non-credit bearing computer application courses (Word, Excel, WordPerfect, and Access) that are provided by educational institutions and businesses certified by manufacturers to engage in providing such training (e.g., CompUSA, IKON, New Horizons).
- Courses on web development, website and database design, and maintenance when job-related or career-related.
- Courses, workshops, or seminars provided by a nationally recognized professional association or their state or local chapter, or recognized by GOER.

### 3. *Provider Eligibility*

Eligible workshops, seminars, conferences, and non-credit bearing courses must be provided by an accredited institution, school, or organization that meets one of the following criteria:

- chartered, approved, or authorized to confer a degree by the New York State Board of Regents or an equivalent recognized educational accrediting body
- licensed or registered by the New York State Education Department or an equivalent recognized educational accrediting body
- licensed, registered, or approved by a department or agency of the State of New York to provide a specific course of instruction
- a business engaged in the delivery of high technology or computer software and hardware training programs and is certified to deliver these courses by manufacturers, such as Microsoft and Novell
- a nonprofit private or public college or university affiliated consultant group a nationally recognized professional association or its state or local chapter for those PEF-represented occupations where opportunities for training are limited, consideration will be given to entities that are organized but not affiliated nationally
- approved to award continuing learning credits, such as Professional Development Hours (PDH) and Continuing Education Credits (CEU)

#### **F. Application Time Period and Deadline**

WSR covers eligible expenses incurred for the period of January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016. All applications must be submitted within 60 days after the end date of the course. The postmark, email date, or fax date will be used to determine the timeliness of the application.

Applications for courses or events that began on or after January 1, 2016 and ended prior to June 9, 2016 must be submitted by August 8, 2016.

#### **G. Release time**

WSR provides reimbursement for the cost of workshops, seminars, conferences, and non-credit bearing courses. It does not entitle an employee to receive release time.

#### **H. Expenses Covered**

Eligible employees will be reimbursed registration (attendance) fees for non-credit bearing professional development courses, workshops, conferences, and seminars, and additional fees for Continuing Education Credits only.

#### **I. Expenses Not Covered**

Expenses not covered by the WSR Program, or any expense that exceeds the maximum reimbursement, are the responsibility of the applicant. Costs or fees not covered include, but are not limited to:

- fees that are not part of the registration fee (late, application, membership, maintenance fees)
- study materials (books, CDs, DVDs)
- transportation, travel, and lodging expenses (parking, meals, permits)
- fees or costs associated with auditing a course
- shipping costs
- certificate or license issuance or renewal fees

**WSR will not cover incomplete or failed non-credit courses or events.**

## **J. Maximum Reimbursement**

An applicant can receive reimbursements of up to \$1,250 per program year.

## **K. Alternative Sources of Financial Assistance**

If the applicant receives financial assistance from any source, the source and amount must be reported on the WSR application and on the paid invoice or a separate list. This amount must be subtracted from the total. An employee who fails to report the amount of assistance must repay the overpayment. These participants may be excluded from participating in future programs. The WSR Program Reimbursement will be secondary to any other assistance received.

## **L. Taxation of Employee Benefits**

The employee is responsible for any taxes and other withholdings as defined by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Code. Taxation of educational benefits is subject to continuous change.

In general, job-related educational benefits are not taxable with the following clarifications and exceptions:

1. Educational benefits that exceed \$5,250 are generally taxable unless they can be excluded as a "working condition fringe benefit."
2. Employees should consult a tax expert with questions regarding taxation of these benefits. GOER cannot provide any tax clarification or advice.

**At the end of each calendar year, the Office of the State Comptroller will withhold estimated taxes from employees whose benefits from this program and any additional educational benefits from their agency exceed \$5,250.** Students are encouraged to seek competent tax advice to determine if the "working condition fringe benefit" is applicable when filing their taxes. This taxation of employer paid educational benefits is subject to continuous change.

## **M. Application and Reimbursement Process**

For complete guidelines and printable application forms, go to [http://www.goer.ny.gov/Training\\_Development/PEF/index.cfm](http://www.goer.ny.gov/Training_Development/PEF/index.cfm) or contact GOER at (518) 474-6612.

### *Step 1: Complete the Application Form*

- Applications can only be submitted once you have successfully completed the course. Applications submitted prior to the end date of the course will not be accepted.
- Read the application and guidelines carefully and provide all the information required.
- All applications must be submitted within 60 days after the end date of the course. The postmark, email date, or fax date will be used to determine the timeliness of the application.
- Complete a separate WSR application for each non-credit-bearing course, workshop, or seminar.
- Incomplete or illegible applications will be returned.
- Applications with course or event dates that differ from the date shown on the documentation will not be accepted.

### *Step 2: Attach the Required Documentation*

- The following documents are required and must be attached to the completed reimbursement application:
  - a. an unaltered invoice, receipt, or itemized summary from the provider, showing the registration (attendance) cost separate from any additional fees;
  - b. list of any financial assistance received toward the cost of the course or event indicating the name of the entity providing the assistance;
  - c. documentation showing the start and end dates of the course or event (month, day, and year); and
  - d. documentation from the provider confirming attendance or successful completion.

*The WSR Program will not cover incomplete or failed non-credit courses or events.*
- Applicants should retain a copy of all documentation for their records.
- The applicant's name must be printed on all original documentation.

### *Step 3: Submit the Application*

Submit signed, dated application and supporting documentation in one of the following ways:

- *U.S. Mail* – Mail application and supporting documentation, postmarked by application deadline, to:

NYS Governor's Office of Employee Relations  
PSTP Reimbursement Unit  
7th Floor  
2 Empire State Plaza  
Albany, NY 12223-1250

- *Email* – Scan application and supporting documentation and email by application deadline to [PSTTraining@goer.ny.gov](mailto:PSTTraining@goer.ny.gov)

- *Fax* – Fax application and supporting documentation by application deadline to (518) 474-8587

#### *Step 4: Application Status*

The following notifications will be sent via email. Accordingly, please be sure applications include a valid email address.

- *Notification of Receipt* — Notification will be sent that the application has been received and is being reviewed.
- *Notification of Hold* — Applicants will be notified when additional information is needed or supporting documentation has not been received.
- *Notification of Rejection or Denial* — Applicants will be notified when their application has been denied and why.
- *Notification of Approval* — Applicants will be notified that their application is being processed for payment.

#### *Step 5: Receive Reimbursement*

Once an application has been approved, reimbursement checks will be mailed from the Office of the State Comptroller to the employee's home. This check will resemble a paycheck or travel expense check and is not automatically deposited.

## **N. Additional Resources**

### *Agency Support*

A limited number of state agencies have set aside funding for their employees' education and training assistance. Some of this funding is from federal sources. Employees should check with their agency/facility training or personnel office regarding the availability of such funds, and restrictions on their use.

### *Support Services for Students with Disabilities*

Many programs offer assistance to students who have physical or learning disabilities. Employees with disabilities who are interested in applying for WSR benefits should call the school as soon as possible so that services can be arranged.

### *Career Mobility in New York State*

The Career Mobility Office (CMO) at the NYS Department of Civil Service can assist state employees in exploring their career options and transfer opportunities. The CMO also offers workshops, such as *Understanding the Merit System*, *Resume Preparation*, and *Interviewing Techniques*. Contact the Career Mobility Office at (800) 553-1322 or (518) 485-6199 for more information.

### *Taxation and Employer Educational Benefits*

Relevant IRS publications on this subject include Notice 97-60, Publication 970, Publication 535, and Publication 508. Call the IRS at (800) 829-1040, consult the IRS home page on the Internet at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) or a tax preparer for more information. The **Office of the State Comptroller will withhold estimated taxes at the end of the calendar year.** Students are

encouraged to seek competent tax advice when filing their taxes. Taxing employer-paid educational benefits is subject to continuous change.

*It is the policy of the state of New York to provide for and promote equal opportunity in employment and equal access to all programs and services without discrimination on the basis of age, race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, creed, military status, disability, marital status, domestic violence victim status, predisposing genetic characteristics, arrest record, previous conviction record, and any other status or condition protected by law.*