Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program (CLEFR)

for

PEF-Represented Employees

Program Guidelines

for

January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017

Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program

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CERTIFICATION AND LICENSURE EXAM FEE REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

A. Program Description

The Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement (CLEFR) Program reimburses the cost of examinations for first time certification, licensure, or designation of Public Employees Federation (PEF)-represented employees. Examination fees to renew certifications, licenses, or designations previously obtained by an employee are not reimbursable. *This program does not cover fees for Civil Service exams. Some Civil Service exams may be reimbursed through PEF Membership Benefits*. *Check the PEF website at www.pef.org under Membership Benefits or call PEF at (518) 785-1900.*

B. Funding and Oversight

Funding for the CLEFR Program is provided through Article 15 of the 2016-2019 Agreement between the State of New York and PEF. Article 15 also establishes the Professional Development Committee (PDC) that consists of two designees from the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) and two from PEF. The PDC has adopted these program guidelines and monitors the administration of this program.

C. Program Highlights

- Provides reimbursement for the cost of examinations for first time certification, licensure, or designation of PEF-represented employees for exams that occurred on or after January 1, 2017 and run through December 31, 2017.
- Maximum reimbursement is $1,100 for the period January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017.
- Reimbursement requires a passing exam grade. CLEFR will not cover incomplete or failed exams.
- All CLEFR applications must be submitted within 90 days after the date of the exam. The postmark or email date will be used to determine the timeliness of the application.
- The IRS considers reimbursements under the Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program taxable income. The Office of the State Comptroller will withhold estimated taxes at the end of the calendar year.

D. Employee Eligibility

The employee's status during the pay period in which the exam was taken will determine the applicable reimbursement rate.

1. *Current PEF-Represented Employees*

   At the time of registration, and upon successfully completing the exam, an employee must be:
   - Actively employed in a PEF-represented position
   - 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
   - Is on the appropriate Civil Service or Roswell Park Preferred List

   To be eligible for reimbursement, the exam start date must be within 12 months of the layoff date. The applicant must provide documentation showing the layoff 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.

E. Exam Eligibility

1. *Job-Related or Career-Related:* The exam must be job-related or career-related.

   - A *job-related* exam directly relates to the employee's current profession or job assignments, duties, and responsibilities.
   - A *career-related* exam provides the employee with the knowledge, skills or abilities to increase opportunity for advancement or career mobility within their current profession or in a career path for which there currently is a need in New York State government, such as nursing and accounting.

Questions frequently arise regarding the eligibility of exams leading to certificates or licenses in fields such as real estate, accounting, and self-help. In keeping with the requirement that the exam be job or career-related, exams in these areas will not be eligible for reimbursement unless the applicant can demonstrate that the subject matter is directly relevant to his or her job or career in New York State government.

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

2. *Certification, Licensure, or Designation*

   The exam must result in first time certification, licensure, or designation for an occupation that currently exists in New York State service. Examples include, but are not limited to:

   - *Information Technology:* Exams for certification in specific software programs or hardware by corporations, such as Microsoft, Novell, and Oracle
   - *Substance Abuse:* Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor written exams
   - *Law:* New York State Bar exam
   - *Finance:* Certified Public Accountant exam
   - *Nursing:* Certification in specific nursing disciplines, such as psychiatry or forensics
   - *Engineering:* Certification in specific engineering disciplines such as storm water management

3. *Provider Eligibility*

   The license, certification, or designation must be awarded by an eligible provider who is defined by one or more of the following:

   - Chartered, approved, or authorized by the New York State Board of Regents or an equivalent recognized body
   - Licensed or registered by the New York State Education Department or an equivalent recognized accrediting body
   - Licensed, registered, or approved by a department or agency of the State of New York to provide specific certification or licensing exams
   - Certified computer or software corporations, such as Microsoft or Oracle, and authorized third parties who administer classes and certification exams on software, hardware, and other related information technology equipment
   - Nationally recognized professional associations or their state or local chapters accredited to administer specific exams and award certification by the appropriate accrediting body

F. Application Time Period and Deadline

CLEFR covers eligible expenses incurred for exams that begin during the period of January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017. All CLEFR applications must be submitted within 90 days

after the date of the exam. The postmark or email date will be used to determine the timeliness of the application.

G. Release Time

CLEFR does not entitle an employee to receive release time.

H. Expenses Covered

Eligible employees will be reimbursed for the cost of examinations for first time certification, licensure, and designations. Where an eligible employee, by virtue of experience and training, is permitted to seek evaluation of credentials in lieu of an examination, reimbursement of fees paid for this evaluation will be permitted provided the evaluation leads to initial certification, licensure, or designation in New York State and all other program requirements are met.

I. Expenses Not Covered

Costs and fees not reimbursed by this program include, but are not limited to:

- Civil Service exam fees
- Fees for renewing or maintaining existing certifications, licenses, and designations whether by application or re-examination
- Any fees that are not part of the examination fee (application, processing, academic fees, shipping fees)
- Study material (books, CDs, DVDs) and supplies
- Fees for exams leading to certification in a career that doesn't exist in New York State service
- Fees for exams leading to college credit for life experience
- Real estate licenses and certifications

J. Maximum Reimbursement

An applicant can receive reimbursements of up to $1,100 per program year.

K. Alternative Sources of Financial Assistance

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

L. Taxation of Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursements

The IRS considers reimbursements under the Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program to be taxable income.

The Office of the State Comptroller will withhold estimated taxes at the end of the calendar year. Employees should consult a tax expert with questions regarding taxation of these benefits. The Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) cannot provide any tax clarification or advice.

M. Application and Reimbursement Process

For complete guidelines and printable application forms, go to www.goer.ny.gov/Training_Development/PEF or contact GOER at (518) 474-6612.

Step 1: Complete the Application Form

- Applications can only be submitted after successful completion of the exam. Applications submitted prior to the end date of the exam will not be accepted.
- Read the application and guidelines carefully and provide all the information required.
- All applications must be submitted within 90 days after the end date of the exam. (The postmark or email date will be used to determine the timeliness of the application.)
- Complete a separate CLEFR application for each exam taken.
- Incomplete or illegible applications will be returned.
- Applications with exam dates that differ from the date shown on the documentation will not be accepted.

Step 2: Attach the Required Documentation

All supporting documents must have the applicant's name printed on it by the issuing entity. Documentation must be in PDF format. All other formats (JPGs or other photo formats, Word Documents, etc.) will not be accepted. Applicants should retain a copy of all documentation for their records.

Each of the following documents is required. They must be converted to a PDF and attached to the completed, signed and dated reimbursement application:

- An unaltered invoice, receipt, or itemized account summary from the exam provider showing the registration cost
- Proof of payment such as a bank or credit card statement or cancelled check
- List of any financial assistance received toward the cost of the exam indicating the name of the entity providing the assistance
- Documentation showing the date of the exam (month, day, and year)
- Documentation from the exam provider indicating successful passing of the exam (license or certificate will not be accepted)

Step 3: Submit the Application

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

- *Email:* Scan the application and supporting documentation, convert to a PDF, and email by the application deadline to psttraining@goer.ny.gov. All documentation must be in PDF format. All other formats (JPGs or other photo formats, Word documents, etc.) will not be accepted.

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

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

Step 4: Application Status

The following notifications will be sent via email. Accordingly, please be sure all 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 address. This check will resemble a paycheck or travel expense check and is not automatically deposited.

Please make sure the address on the application is current.

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.