



DRAFT: Public Service Promise Policy

Purpose

The Public Service Promise policy, enacted by _____ (public employer name, hereafter referred to as “the agency”), is intended to create an equitable and transparent educational benefit for its employees to pursue postsecondary degrees and credentials. This policy benefits multiple constituencies:

- **The employees.** Providing educational benefits helps employees overcome financial hurdles and out-of-pocket expenses that prevent them from continuing their education.
- **The agency.** Providing educational benefits has been proven to yield positive return on investment for employers through reduced turnover and related reduced re-hiring costs as well as increased skills and competencies of staff.
- **Taxpayers.** Any savings or improved quality realized by the agency will directly benefit the community and taxpayers the agency serves either through reduced taxes or improved services.
- **The Community.** The overall increase in economic activity from this policy will improve the standard of living for citizens throughout the community. Reduction in the disparities in educational attainment based on race, age and financial circumstance will strengthen communities in myriad ways, including more equitable access to opportunity and growing social awareness and empathy that results from more diverse workplaces and boardrooms.
- **The State.** Achieve60AZ works across Arizona to improve overall educational attainment and economic well-being in each of its diverse communities. This policy adheres to statewide recommended best practice and aligns our efforts with those of sister communities all building toward a stronger Arizona.

Definitions

Educational program: credit or non-credit coursework that leads directly to or contributes to a degree or credential at an accredited in-state postsecondary institution.

Educational Benefits: a set of specific financial and non-financial supports provided by the agency to its employees to support the costs related to employees’ participation in educational programs. *(Reference the “Program Benefits” section of this policy for more detail.)*

Core Educational Costs: financial obligations directly related to academic instruction including tuition, fees, required course materials and supplies.

Supplemental Educational Costs: financial obligations not directly related to academic instruction that an employee must pay to be able to participate in an educational program, including childcare, transportation, computer hardware and internet access.

Request Process: The process through which an employee formally requests use of educational benefits.

Partnering Agency: A separate state, local or tribal government that also offers educational attainment benefits aligned to the framework of the Public Service Promise.

Other Benefits: Non-educational benefits offered by the employer such as health care, retirement and similar incentives.

Full-time employee: *(insert definition from employee handbook)*

Part-time employee: *(insert definition from employee handbook)*



Employee Eligibility

This policy provides equal access to educational benefits and prohibits discrimination in the policy's administration based on race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, disability status, genetics, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local laws.

All full-time and part-time employees who are eligible for other benefits are also eligible to receive educational benefits. Employees become eligible to receive the educational benefits at the same time they become eligible to receive other benefits.

Should available resources be less than the total amount requested from employees, benefits shall be allocated as follows:

- First, to employees who are currently enrolled in an educational program, used the educational benefit in the immediately preceding funding cycle and meet criteria for continued use;
- Second, to employees who did not use the educational benefit in the immediately preceding funding cycle and who do not currently hold a workforce certification, postsecondary certificate, associate degree or higher;
- Third, on a first-come first-served basis for all other employees based on when they completed the request process.

An employee of a Partnering Organization who transfers employment to the agency will have the employee's experience at their previous organization honored and incorporated in the same manner as existing employees of the agency as it relates to this policy, provided the Partnering Organization has a similar and reciprocal policy in place.

Employees who use the educational benefits must remain in good academic standing as defined by the educational provider and good employment standing as defined by the agency to be eligible for educational benefits in future terms.

Program Benefits

Support for Core Educational Costs

All employees who meet the eligibility requirements listed in the previous section may receive the lesser of \$5,250 per year or the employee's actual core educational costs. These costs will be paid by the employer without a requirement of pre-payment by the employee. The total amount allocated to this portion of the program is \$X per year.

Short-Term Supplemental Assistance

Employees using the *core educational cost* benefit may also request an additional benefit to support supplemental costs. An employee and/or the employee's supervisor may submit a request for this category of funding. All requests submitted are strictly confidential. These requests will be considered and awarded on a rolling basis based on the requests submitted. The total amount allocated to this portion of the program is \$X per year funded by the agency and \$Y funded by outside foundations or contributors.



Educational Savings Accounts

For employees who do not meet the eligibility criteria for direct assistance or who wish to direct their educational benefits to a spouse, employees may contribute to an educational savings account that have the same tax benefits as health savings accounts and retirement accounts. The agency will match X% of contributions up to an annual limit of \$X.

Request Process

An employee may request the benefit at any time during the year by completing the agency's application (*include directions or link to access the application*). The agency will evaluate applications, prioritize applicants according to this policy and award funds X times per year. The funding windows are as follows:

- MM/DD to MM/DD
- MM/DD to MM/DD
- ...

Awareness and Training

The agency will ensure uniform access to information about this policy through the following activities.

- All newly hired employees will receive written and verbal information about the educational benefits policy and the request process as a standard part of orientation.
- Anyone who supervises one or more employees will receive annual training related to this policy, including how to (1) identify employees who would benefit from the program, (2) encourage them to participate, (3) offer appropriate work accommodations to allow them to participate in the educational program, and (4) ensure equitable treatment of all employees in these efforts.

Referral Program

Employees may refer other employees to the program by submitting a nomination to the director of human resources. If the nominated employee enrolls in an educational program after being nominated, the nominating employee will receive a one-time incentive payment of \$50.

Procurement

The agency will examine its procurement policy and consider modifications to give preference to vendors and contractors that have an educational benefit policy in place for their employees.