



Agenda Item No. (3)

To: Rules, Policy and Industrial Relations Committee/Committee of the Whole
Meeting of September 21, 2023

From: Kellee J. Hopper, Deputy General Manager, Administration and Development
Denis J. Mulligan, General Manager

Subject: **APPROVE AN INCREASE IN ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE
REIMBURSEMENT ALLOTMENT**

Recommendation

The Rules, Policy and Industrial Relations Committee recommends that the Board of Directors raise the annual educational assistance reimbursement allowable amount to \$3,000 each calendar year for eligible employees for continuing education and/or professional development through a program that either offers growth in an area related to an employee's current position or might lead to promotional opportunities within the Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District. The educational assistance has commonly been referred to as tuition reimbursement.

This reimbursement program includes costs for tuition and books for programs such as college credit courses, continuing education courses, seminars, certification studies and/or tests. It also includes costs for position-related licensing and certification application and/or renewal fees. An employee must secure a passing grade of "C" or higher, and/or successfully pass the certification and/or licensing test to be eligible for reimbursement. Expenses must be validated by receipts, and a copy of the final grade, license or certification issued by the learning institution, certifying or licensing agency must be presented upon request for reimbursement.

This matter will be presented to the Board of Directors at its September 22, 2023, meeting for appropriate action.

Summary

On November 14, 2014, the Board of Directors approved an allowable tuition reimbursement of \$2,000 per calendar year to assist employees in offsetting a portion of educational expenses to help facilitate their education and help them stay current with business and industry trends.

The Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District (District) has long been a strong supporter of employees obtaining additional education and training to help their development and potential career advancements. Having an education develops numerous skills from communication and problem-solving to analytical thinking and time management, helps develop skills that may give them the edge when seeking future positions.

Over the past several years, there has been an increase in the utilization of the District's tuition reimbursement program. We have employees who have enrolled in trade courses, undergraduate programs, as well as doctoral programs and even law school. We celebrate and promote these activities in the workforce.

We have had approximately 80 tuition reimbursement requests over the past two years and are seeing that a significant percentage of the courses or combination of courses (if pursuing a degree) requested are exceeding the current \$2,000 per calendar year allotment. This is, at least partly impacted by the increased in educational fees and tuitions in recent years, as well as specialized trainings that some of our workforce have wanted to further their experience. For instance, some of our Ferry personnel have requested courses in marine corrosion or navigational training.

In order to continue providing a means for District employees to further their educational and skills development, and to ensure our workforce has sufficient skills and abilities, it is requested that the annual tuition reimbursement for all employees be increased to \$3,000 per calendar year per employee.

Since this proposed increase will also apply to represented employees, the District's labor negotiator has notified the unions of this recommendation with an offer to meet and confer, if the unions desire to do so.

Fiscal Impact

This fiscal impact of this recommendation will vary depending on use, but it is forecasted that approximately 40 employees would use up to the proposed maximum of \$3,000 a year. The \$1,000 increase per request to the tuition reimbursement program would cost an additional \$40,000 to this program. This will be funded through savings in the District Division for FY 23/24 but will be budgeted accordingly in future years.