

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT AND AWARDS**

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this chapter is to describe policies and procedures related to employee development and award recognition of employee achievements and service.

**Intent:** It is intended that employee development and awards programs: 1) are based on merit principles, 2) result in enhanced staff ability, skills, and service delivery, and 3) appropriately recognize employee achievements.

## **7.0 GENERAL POLICIES**

- (A) Employee development activities must be related to organizational goals and objectives.
- (B) Employee development should enhance quality job performance so County needs are met and service delivery is improved. Development activities should be primarily for the acquisition and enhancement of skills that benefit current job performance, and secondarily for future career potential with the County.
- (C) Employee development activities must be planned and pre-approved to ensure funds are available, cost-effectiveness is maximized, and the most applicable and relevant activities are identified.
- (D) Attendance at approved training is generally considered authorized work. However, employees involved in educational activities that are part of career development may be required to use Education Leave, accumulated leave, or Leave Without Pay.
- (E) Participation in employee development activities and recognition of employee achievements are not entitlements. They are always subject to supervisory and Department Director approval with consideration of all relevant factors.
- (F) The County Administrator may create and implement employee recognition and incentive programs.<sup>1</sup>

## **7.1 RESPONSIBILITIES**

- (A) Department Directors should provide overall leadership and direction in orienting, training, and developing employees in their departments, assessing department training needs, approving employee attendance at development activities, and appropriate recognition of employee achievements and accomplishments.

<sup>1</sup>Revised July 18, 2006

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- (B) Supervisors are responsible for assisting employees in identifying training and career development activities that relate to performance standards and expectations and enhance career goals with Loudoun County.
- (C) Employees are responsible for actively participating and initiating the identification of training and development activities that will enhance their skills, abilities, and job with Loudoun County.

### **7.2 COUNTY TRAINING PROGRAM**

- (A) As funding and resources are available, the County will offer a training program that will address organizational needs, skill development, and acquisition of knowledge.
- (B) Training courses are generally available to all County staff. Courses may be provided to certain groups of employees, e.g., Department Directors and other executives, supervisors, new employees, etc. when appropriate. Typically, attendance at training is optional; however, there may be circumstances that generate a need for mandatory attendance. Supervisors are required to attend any training designated as part of a prescribed supervisory training curriculum. New employees will be provided human resources, payroll, and benefits orientation.

### **7.3 CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

- (A) Employees should be encouraged to plan career goals and take courses in support of those goals that will develop their skills and abilities and result in enhanced value to the County. Career development is considered to include training for growth in current position and future County employment.
- (B) Career development should be discussed and planned as part of the performance planning and assessment process.

### **7.4 EDUCATION LEAVE**

- (A) Education Leave may be provided to regular employees who need an absence from work to attend courses at a university, college, special institute, or other educational or training-related organization for the purpose of meeting training and career development objectives. Education Leave at full or partial pay must be in support of courses that are of direct benefit to County services.
- (B) Education Leave may be authorized at full pay, partial pay, or without pay, depending upon the circumstance:
  - (1) A maximum of 10 workdays (in any fiscal year) of Education Leave at full pay may be approved by the employee's Department Director for career development purposes.

- (2) Education Leave at full pay may be approved by the County Administrator for the purpose of obtaining a license, certification, knowledge, skills, and abilities that are cost effective to the County for the two-year period following completion of the leave or to complete mandatory training or education requirements for the employee's current position. Education Leave is generally limited to 13 weeks.

Education Leave at half pay must enter a binding commitment with the County to continue to work for the County for a period at least twice the period of the Education Leave, or repay the Education Leave salary on a pro-rated basis, if the employee terminates employment within the period of commitment.

- (3) A maximum of one calendar year of Education Leave at half pay may be approved by the County Administrator for the purpose of:
- i. Completing academic credits leading to a degree specifically related to the employee's current employment or anticipated future County employment, and when completion of the academic program requires half time absence from employment
  - ii. Permitting senior staff the opportunity to attend courses related to professional development while their duties require continued availability during the period of Education Leave for consultation with the County Administrator

## **7.5 EDUCATION INCREASE<sup>2,3</sup>**

Regular employees will receive a 5% base salary pay increase upon graduation from an accredited college with a bachelor's or higher-level degree in a specialized educational field related to their job with the County. Institutions offering online and/or experimental credits will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine eligibility for the increase. If the employee is at the maximum of the pay band, the employee will receive a one-time lump sum payment equivalent to 5% of base salary. Employees who will not receive all or part of the education increase due to the salaries' proximity to the maximum of the pay band will receive a one time lump sum payment equivalent to the dollar difference between the amount of the education increase and the maximum of the pay band. The education increase must be requested by the employee within a reasonable timeframe, not to exceed six months from the date the degree was earned.

### **7.5.05 CERTIFICATIONS<sup>3,4</sup>**

Regular employees will receive a lump-sum payment equivalent to 2.5% of base salary for attaining an associate degree or post-baccalaureate certificate from an accredited

<sup>2</sup>Revised October 21, 2008

<sup>3</sup>Revised March 17, 2009

<sup>4</sup>April 1, 2008

institution that is directly related to the employee's current job or a certification that 1) is directly related to the employee's current job, 2) is above and beyond the minimum qualifications required of the employee's current job, 3) adds value to the employee's job and his or her ability to perform the job, 4) is recognized by an accepted state or national association, organization, or private corporation, 5) requires passage of a written exam and/or equivalent practicum, 6) requires extensive (generally defined as six months or longer) classroom instruction and/or equivalent on-the job-training, and 7) is on a list of certifications approved by the County Administrator.

Institutions offering online and/or experimental credits for associate degrees, post-baccalaureate certificates, and certifications will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine eligibility for the certification payment, in accordance with procedures for submitting, reviewing, and approving certifications.

Full and part-time regular employees are eligible for certification payments. A maximum of two (2) lump-sum certification payments may be granted to each employee in a (5) five-year period. Certification lump sum payments must be requested by the employee within a reasonable timeframe, not to exceed six months from the date the certification was earned.

## **7.6 TUITION ASSISTANCE<sup>5</sup>**

The County of Loudoun encourages employee development and believes that employees should have the opportunity to improve their work-related knowledge, skills, and abilities and further their job-related education. The purpose of the Tuition Assistance Program is to provide financial assistance for employees to have the opportunity to achieve this goal.

The Tuition Assistance Program is available to all regular employees who are regularly scheduled to work 30 or more hours per week and have completed their probationary period. Courses must be taken through an accredited college or university and result in college credits that relate directly to the employee's current job or be a required core course to complete a job-related degree. The employee must successfully complete the course in the expected timeframe and receive a grade of "C" or above for undergraduate courses, or a grade of "B" or above for post graduate courses, or "Pass" if a Pass/Fail course.

The amount appropriated to the Tuition Assistance Program shall be determined each fiscal year. Reimbursement is subject to the availability of funds. Employees who wish to pursue the Tuition Assistance Program should complete a Tuition Assistance Program application, obtain the required signatures and forward to HR/Benefits for processing.

## **7.7 BONUSES**

Individual project and team bonuses may be provided to employees as part of the performance assessment system. Refer to Chapter 8, Performance Planning and Assessment, for policies and procedures related to these types of bonuses.

<sup>5</sup>Revised December 15, 2009

## **7.8 SUGGESTION AWARDS PROGRAM**

The purpose of the Suggestion Awards Program is to provide recognition on a one-time basis to those employees who contribute practical ideas that result in monetary savings, increased effectiveness of public relations or service to the public, or safer working conditions. The program also serves as a mechanism to promote employee relations by increasing employee participation in the activities and operation of the County Government.

All awards (including the number and type of award) are approved at the discretion of and by the County Administrator. The type and level of award may include (but is not limited to) letters of recognition, days off with pay and cash awards, that generally do not exceed \$1,000. The County Administrator may approve awards above \$1,000 for suggestions that provide extraordinary benefit to the County.

Acceptance of an award constitutes a waiver of the employee's or the employee's heirs claims of rights against the County for the County's use of the suggestion. The employee will retain all rights or interest for the use of suggestions in non-County business to include pursuit of patents or royalties.

## **7.9 SERVICE AWARDS PROGRAM**

The County Service Awards Program provides recognition to employee's total years of regular County service (excluding breaks in service), recognizing service at five-year intervals. Retirement recognition is based on a minimum of 15 years of regular service with the County and is calculated consistent with the Virginia Retirement System (VRS). All County employees, and all Elected Officials and their employees who are on the County payroll, or who are signatory to the County's Personnel Policies, are eligible to receive Service Awards.

## **7.10 EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE/RECOGNITION LEAVE<sup>6</sup>**

Department Directors may provide up to six full days of paid leave per employee per fiscal year. Leave may be granted by the Department Director in full day increments based on the Value of a Day for the employee's position. This leave can be used as a reward for exceptional job performance or as recognition for other work-related accomplishments. All regular full-time, part-time, and full-time long-term (longer than 1 year) temporary employees are eligible to receive exceptional performance/recognition leave (including employees who are still serving their probationary period). The County Administrator has discretion to approve additional days of paid leave. (See also 6.4.14)

<sup>6</sup>Revised October 16, 2007