

## TOWN COUNCIL

### STAFF REPORT Human Resources



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| <b>MEETING DATE:</b>    | October 14, 2025                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>PROJECT:</b>         | Consideration of a Resolution to Adopt the Revised Town of Bluffton Employee Handbook: Policy 5.9 Educational Bonus and 5.11 Discretionary Award |
| <b>PROJECT MANAGER:</b> | Anni Evans, Human Resources Director                                                                                                             |

**REQUEST:** Consideration by Town council to adopt by resolution the revisions to the Town of Bluffton Employee Handbook: Policy 5.9 Educational Bonus and Policy 5.11 Discretionary Award.

**BACKGROUND:** Town Council approved adoption of the Town of Bluffton Employee Handbook on October 13, 2004. This provided for subsequent revisions to be approved by Resolution of Town Council. Revisions to the Handbook have been made in accordance with this procedure in 2006, 2008, 2015, 2019, 2021, 2023, and 2024.

Staff reviewed and have recommended the following changes to the Town of Bluffton Employee Handbook:

#### Changes to existing policies:

- **5.9 Educational Bonus**
  - Standardized and Transparent Bonus Amounts: The policy now provides clear, pre-determined bonus amounts for certifications by introducing formal tables. This moves away from the previous case-by-case determination by Department Heads, ensuring greater consistency and fairness.
  - Refined Eligibility and Participation Rules: New clauses have been added to restrict an employee's eligibility if they have received disciplinary action within the last 90 days or have been unsuccessful in a previous attempt to complete a program. Additionally, employees are limited to participating in a maximum of two bonus programs per fiscal year to ensure equitable distribution.
  - Formalized Re-certification and Bonus Program Management: The policy now clearly defines and limits the re-certification bonus to programs requiring re-testing or CEUs, excluding those that have lapsed or only require a fee for renewal. Furthermore, a new formal process has been established for adding new certifications to the bonus program, involving a multi-step review by Human Resources, Finance, and the Town Manager.

- **5.11 Discretionary Award**

- Updated to include a clear, tiered award structure based on the impact of the achievement. The revised policy also requires that all monetary awards be supported by verifiable data.

**NEXT STEPS:** Upon adoption of Resolution, provide an electronic copy of the updated policies in the Employee Handbook to all employees, conduct training sessions to answer questions and review the updated information.

**SUMMARY:** Human Resources is recommending updating the current Employee Handbook to stay current and compliant. Regularly reviewing and updating the Employee Handbook is best business practice.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Drafts of revised policies and original policies
  2. Resolution
  3. Recommended Motion
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