



5.9 Educational / Certification Bonus Policy.

The Town supports continuing education efforts made by Town employees through the reimbursement of tuition and training for certifications related to positions. Further, in our efforts to provide excellent levels of service to our citizens, the Town of Bluffton continuously strives to train and educate its employees and believes that the organization benefits from having a workforce that achieves certain academic attainment and certain specialized training and certifications.

It is the policy of the Town of Bluffton that all full-time regular employees of the Town of Bluffton may be eligible to receive a bonus provided they meet the eligibility requirements defined below and budgeted funds are available.

- Eligibility
- All academic degrees must be awarded from an accredited college or university. Only those institutions accredited by the US Department of Education are recognized.
- All certification programs must be from an organization or agency approved by the Department Head and used to further the skills and job knowledge for the employee.
- It is the responsibility of the employee to request consideration of any educational or certification bonus through his/her Department Head.
- The respective Department Head will consider requests for educational or certification bonus pay using the required payroll form and will make recommendation to the Town Manager along with justification and review by Finance Director.
- The Town Manager will have final approval or disapproval of all requests.
- It is understood that application of any academic degree and certifications must be relevant and useful in the conduct of job duties and responsibilities and must be contained within Table 1 OR Table 2.
- An employee is not eligible if on probation or most recent performance evaluation is less than satisfactory.
- An employee is not eligible if they have been issued disciplinary action within 90-days of the request for an educational/certification bonus.
- An employee is eligible to participate in a maximum of two bonus programs per fiscal year; exceptions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and must be approved by Human Resources.
- If an employee is unsuccessful in completing a program, the Town will not pay for the employee to participate in a program a second time.
- Re-certification of any program will be eligible for a flat bonus of up to \$100. For the purpose of this policy, 're-certification' is defined as the process of renewing a certification that requires either a new exam, re-testing, or the completion of Continuing Education Units (CEU) to maintain active status. This bonus does not apply to certifications that have lapsed or those that only require a fee for renewal.

Educational Bonus / Certification Bonus

- An Educational / Certification Bonus may be awarded as long as eligibility requirements are met, and budgeted funds are available.



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- Budgeted funds will be available from a fixed annual allocation requested by the Finance Department and approved as part of the budget process.
- Education / **Certification** Bonus amounts are shown on Table 1 and Table 2.
- The Educational / **Certification** Bonus amounts will be reviewed every year by the Town Manager to plan for budgeted funds.
- If an employee receives an Educational / **Certification** Bonus and leaves within one-year to work for another employer, the amount of the Bonus will be re-paid to the Town through payroll deduction on the employee's final pay.
- ~~Funding of the Bonus is determined by budget.~~
- Completion of a degree or a certification is not a guarantee that a Bonus will be paid.
- For consideration of an Educational / **Certification** Bonus, an employee must submit:
 - Copy of transcript from accredited college or university showing completion of degree; for a certificate program, a copy of completion from the certifying agency or organization.
 - Memorandum to Department Head detailing degree or certificate earned and requesting consideration of Educational Bonus.
- For approval of Educational / **Certification** Bonus, the Department Head will review information from employee and complete a Payroll Status Change Form noting appropriate bonus amount attaching copies of information from employee.
- Department Head will have Finance Director review and request approval from Town Manager.
- Department Head will notify employee of approved Educational / **Certification** Bonus and submit through Payroll with a copy to Human Resources for training file.
- Department Heads may request that a professional certification or license be added to the Town's approved Certification/License Bonus Table. Requests must follow the process below:
 - **Submission of Request**
 - The Department Head will submit a **justification memo** to Human Resources.
 - The memo must include the following details:
 - **Certification/License Name** and issuing authority.
 - **Requirements to Obtain** (education, coursework, experience, exams).
 - **Validity Period** (duration the certification/license remains active before renewal).
 - **Organizational Benefit** (how the certification/license enhances employee effectiveness, supports Town operations, or improves service delivery).
 - **Maintenance Requirements** (continuing education, renewal exams, or other conditions).
 - **Estimated Budgetary Impact** (cost to obtain/maintain and potential number of employees likely to pursue).
 - Review by Human Resources
 - HR will review the request for completeness, confirm applicability to Town positions, and ensure alignment with organizational goals.
 - HR will compare the certification/license to existing tiers in the approved bonus table to recommend a compensation level.
 - **Finance Review**



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- HR will forward the request and recommendation to Finance to assess budget impact and confirm availability of funds within the program allocation
- **Town Manager Approval**
 - Following HR and Finance review, the Town Manager will make the final determination on whether to add the certification/license to the approved table.
- **Communication and Recordkeeping**
 - Once approved, HR will update and maintain the **master Certification/License Bonus Table**.
 - The updated table will be shared with all Department Heads and made available to employees for reference.
 - Approved additions will apply **only on a go-forward basis**; no retroactive bonuses will be granted.
- **Ongoing Administration**
 - Requests may be submitted on a **rolling basis** throughout the year.
 - HR will prepare an **annual summary report** of new additions, program utilization, and budget impact for review by Administration.

5.11 Discretionary Awards.

This policy establishes a framework for recognizing and rewarding employees and teams for outstanding achievements that provide a significant benefit to the Town of Bluffton. Awards are discretionary and are not an entitlement.

Applicability: This policy applies to all employees of the Town of Bluffton this policy does not apply to Town Council.

Policy: The Town of Bluffton provides employee recognition and incentive awards to individuals or teams who demonstrate exemplary work beyond their essential job functions.

Criteria for Consideration: An employee or team may be considered for a Discretionary Award for achievements such as:

- Achieving excellence on a project or effort that falls outside normal essential job duties.
- Resolving a critical problem or capitalizing on an exceptional opportunity.
- Exhibiting an unusually high level of competence, imagination, or persistence in achieving a goal.
- Demonstrating outstanding effort and leadership in support of team members.

Eligibility

- All full-time and part-time regular employees are eligible. Town Council is not eligible.
- An employee is not eligible if on probation or most recent performance evaluation is less than satisfactory.
- To be eligible for a discretionary award, employees must not have been subject to any disciplinary action within the past 90 days. This applies regardless of whether the employee is part of a team recognized for the award. Employees recognized as part of a team for a discretionary award will



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be considered for eligibility based on the team's overall performance. However, individual employees who have been disciplined within the past 90 days will not be eligible to receive the individual portion of the award, even if their team is recognized.

Award Structure:

- **Non-Monetary Awards:**

- Non-monetary recognition, such as a plaque or certificate, may be awarded for outstanding achievement.
- The value of a non-monetary award cannot exceed \$50 per award.
- All non-monetary awards must be documented using the Payroll Status Change Notice Form and Justification Memo.

- **Monetary Awards:**

- Monetary awards are reserved for achievements that provide a demonstrable, measurable benefit to the Town.
- The maximum monetary award is \$1,000 per individual, per fiscal year. This limit applies to each individual's portion of a team award.
- Monetary awards must be supported by verifiable data that clearly demonstrates the accomplishment's impact.
 - Award amounts will vary depending on the scope and impact of the accomplishment. The following ranges are provided as guidance:
 - Up to \$400: Accomplishment with department-level impact.
 - Up to \$700: Accomplishment with cross-departmental or significant operational impact.
 - Up to \$1,000: Accomplishment with substantial town-wide impact, critical problem resolution, or exceptional leadership during emergencies.
 - Supervisors must justify the recommended award level in the Justification Memo using verifiable data. Final award amounts are subject to approval by the Department Head, HR, Finance, and the Town Manager.

Verifiable Data for Monetary Awards: The Justification Memo must include specific, verifiable data to support the award recommendation. Examples of such data include:

- **Cost Savings or Operational Efficiencies:** A documented "before and after" budget comparison, showing quantifiable savings or a detailed breakdown of process improvements and their impact on efficiency.
- **Major Project Leadership:** A project or strategic initiative, as outlined in the Town's Strategic Plan document, outlining the individual's or team's leadership role and the successful outcome.
- **Exceptional Service:** A detailed account of actions taken during an emergency or critical event, with documentation of the positive outcome.

Approval Process: All award recommendations, both monetary and non-monetary, must be submitted by the employee's supervisor using the Payroll Status Change Notice Form and a Justification Memo. The following approvals are required:



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- Supervisor / Department Head
- Human Resources
- ATM
- Finance
- Town Manager (Final Approval)

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