RTAP Scholarship Program Guidelines

Program Description
A portion of RTAP funding has been set aside by New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to provide financial assistance for training transportation system staff. These funds may be used to attend training programs, professional development seminars, or educational conferences. The purpose of the RTAP Scholarship program is to help offset costs associated with these training programs and to encourage the professional development of staff supporting rural transportation and mobility management in New York State.

Program Overview

- Pre-Approval required. Send all scholarship requests to NYSDOT at least four weeks prior to event.
- If the request is for an out-of-state conference, include justification and agenda. Only one person per agency may apply for out-of-state conferences.
- NYSDOT will notify system whether request is approved or denied.
- Travel expenses are reimbursed at government rates, unless there is a valid justification.
- Sales Tax paid in New York State will not be reimbursed.
- Request reimbursement within 60 days after event.
- Submit original hotel and public transportation receipts, plus signed statement of personal auto travel, if applicable.
- Reimbursement should be made in 4-6 weeks.
- Additional details are contained in the Program Administration section below:

Program Administration

Eligible Training
All operators and sponsors of rural transportation funded under Section 5310 and Section 5311 are eligible to use RTAP scholarships for training which contributes to the operation and management of the transportation system. Courses, seminars, workshops, and conferences with a subject matter specifically related to the transportation industry are eligible (e.g. NYPTA conferences). The training can be in-house, in-state, or out-of-state.

Conferences or training events sponsored by NYSDOT are also eligible RTAP activities and the travel and related expenses for attending NYSDOT sponsored events will be reimbursed by RTAP in addition to the annual scholarship amount for each provider. However, you still need to request funding reimbursement with the scholarship application form.

Also, certain training materials are also eligible to be purchased with RTAP funds, especially if the materials can be shared with other organizations.

Reimbursable Expenses
If an application is approved, the individual/system will be reimbursed for up to 100 percent of the tuition/registration costs of the selected program. Additional costs involved with attending a training program may also be eligible (e.g., transportation, lodging, and meals, reimbursed according to New York State and Per Diem guidelines). If additional expenses are determined to be eligible, the applicant will be reimbursed in accordance with New York State travel policies. When making hotel reservations, you must request government rate. If you can not find a hotel at government rate, you need to document and provide justification why you could not find a hotel at government rate.

For travel to out-of-state conferences/training events, scholarships will be limited to one person per agency.

**Ineligible Expenses**

Scholarship funds cannot be used to reimburse membership dues for professional organizations, to pay for staff time (wages), or to purchase office equipment. In some cases, equipment needed for a clear training purpose (e.g. projector), may be considered an eligible expense. Inefficient actions, such as sending multiple people to an event in separate cars or lodging expenses over state rate without justification, will not be reimbursed.

RTAP scholarships are intended for training-related expenses. Other technical assistance activities and materials generally are funded from other portions of NYSDOT’s RTAP or Section 5310/5311 budgets. If you have any questions concerning the eligibility of a proposed use of scholarship funds, please call NYSDOT’s RTAP Manager.

**Application Process**

RTAP scholarship requests should be submitted to NYSDOT as early as possible, preferably at least four weeks prior to the date of the training event. Please complete the RTAP Scholarship Application form, including at minimum the name and description of the training class or event, the date(s) and location of the class or event, and any registration fees. If you would like to attend an out-of-state conference, please include the agenda and a few sentence explanation about how the conference will benefit your system. Upon return from a conference, please submit a brief report, no more than one page, on the information obtained at the event and how it will be utilized at your system. Use estimated travel costs to the extent possible; please note that it is not necessary to include the per diem rate as part of the request.

The RTAP Scholarship Application form is attached, and is also available online at the NYSDOT website: www.nysdot.gov. Use the search function and look for “RTAP Scholarship.” When complete, fax, email or mail the form to NYSDOT as indicated.

**Approval**

All applications will be reviewed by the RTAP Manager. Applications will be evaluated on the basis of eligibility as a training activity, as well as the amount of funds available both to the applicant and the overall program. NYSDOT will make every effort to review the application within five days of receipt and will notify the agency that the application is either approved or rejected. Applicants can contact NYSDOT’s RTAP Manager at any time for additional information.

**Reimbursement**

After attending an approved training program, the applicant must submit the original RTAP scholarship application form, along with the following as applicable, to NYSDOT in order to be
Registration fees: must include a copy of receipt of payment.

Lodging expenses: send ORIGINAL hotel receipt, not a copy. NYSDOT will reimburse room costs up to the maximum allowable government rate. **You must request government rate when making hotel reservations.** If you can not find a hotel at government rate, you need to document and provide justification why you could not find a hotel at government rate. NYSDOT cannot reimburse New York State tax on hotel rooms. If the requested training activity is out of state, call NYSDOT to obtain rates, or view the current government rates on the General Services Administration Web Site at [http://www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov) and search for “Per Diem Rates”.

Transportation expenses for train, air, bus, taxi: NYSDOT requires the ORIGINAL passenger receipt.

Personal car mileage will be reimbursed at government mileage rates ($0.55 per mile as of January 1, 2009, but subject to change). Individuals from the same organization traveling to the same training event are expected to car pool and not drive separately unless approved in advance. The second page of the application form, “Statement of Automobile Travel” must be completed and signed.

Tolls and Parking Fees: Receipts for tolls and parking are required only if expenses exceed $10. Toll or parking expenses less than $10 need only be listed on the application form.

Meals (reimbursed at government rates): in most cases, NYSDOT reimburses at the government per diem rate (breakfast and dinner only, not lunch); meals receipts are not required.

Reimbursement normally takes 4-6 weeks from receipt of the above documentation. **IMPORTANT:** NYSDOT cannot reimburse expenses if the above is not submitted in a timely manner. Any outstanding scholarship requests that are not followed by the submission of expenses within 60 days of the scheduled event will be removed from NYSDOT's files.

**For More Information**
For information concerning the NYSDOT RTAP Scholarship program, application forms, and questions, contact:

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