



**Office of
Employee Relations**

Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program for PEF-Represented Employees

Program Guidelines
for January 1, 2023 through
December 31, 2023

**Certification and Licensure Exam Fee
Reimbursement Program**

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CERTIFICATION AND LICENSURE EXAM FEE REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

A. Program Description

The Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement (CLEFR) Program reimburses the cost of examinations for first time certification, licensure, or designation of Public Employees Federation (PEF)-represented employees. CLEFR enables employees to improve job-related skills in their profession and gain the knowledge and skills necessary for promotional opportunities and career mobility within New York State service. Examination fees to renew certifications, licenses, or designations previously obtained by an employee are not reimbursable. *This program does not cover fees for Civil Service exams. Some Civil Service exams may be reimbursed through PEF Membership Benefits. Check the PEF website at www.pef.org under **Membership Benefits** or call PEF at (518) 785-1900.*

B. Funding and Oversight

Funding for the CLEFR Program is provided through Article 15 of the 2019-2023 Agreement between the State of New York and PEF. Article 15 also establishes the Professional Development Committee (PDC) that consists of two designees from the Office of Employee Relations (OER) and two from PEF. The PDC has adopted these program guidelines and monitors the administration of this program.

C. Program Highlights

- Provides reimbursement for the cost of examinations for first time certification, licensure, or designation of PEF-represented employees for exams that begin during the period of January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023.
- Maximum reimbursement is \$1,100 per calendar year for the time period of January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023.
- Reimbursement requires a passing exam grade. CLEFR will not cover incomplete or failed exams.
- All CLEFR applications and supporting documentation must be submitted within 90 days after the end date of the exam. The postmark or email date will be used to determine the timeliness of the application. Applications for exams that began on or after January 1, 2023, and ended prior to March 20, 2023, must be submitted by June 19, 2023. The start date of the exam determines program year eligibility.

C. Program Highlights (Continued)

- **All reimbursements issued during the calendar year are reported to the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) during the month of October. Once these reimbursements are reported, no further payments will be issued until after January 1 of the following calendar year.**
- **The IRS considers reimbursements under the Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program taxable income. The Office of the State Comptroller will withhold estimated taxes at the end of the calendar year. This may result in substantial withholding from paychecks at the end of the year and applicants should plan accordingly.**

D. Employee Eligibility

Applicants are eligible to participate in the CLEFR Program under the following conditions:

1. *Current PEF-Represented Employees*

At both the start and end dates of the exam, the applicant must be:

- Actively employed in a PEF-represented position
- A New York State or Roswell Park Cancer Institute employee with attendance rules coverage who is either full- or part-time (working 50 percent or more)

2. *Laid Off Employees*

A New York State or Roswell Park Cancer Institute employee is eligible for reimbursement if the applicant:

- Has been laid off
- Has not been rehired by New York State or Roswell Park in a PEF-represented position
- Is on the appropriate Civil Service or Roswell Park Preferred List

To be eligible for reimbursement, the exam start date must be within 12 months of the layoff date. The applicant must provide documentation showing the layoff date and preferred list standing. The documentation must be signed by a personnel officer and sent as an attachment with other supporting documentation.

3. *Less than Half-Time Employees*

A New York State or Roswell Park Cancer Institute employee, represented by PEF, who works less than 50 percent, shall receive 50 percent of the benefit with proper documentation. Eligibility will be based on work status on the start date of the exam.

E. Exam Eligibility

CLEFR is available for job-related and career-related exams that result in first time certification, licensure, or designation at an approved institution or professional association.

1. *Job-Related or Career-Related:*

- *Job-related* exams must directly relate to the employee's current profession or job assignments, duties, and responsibilities.
- *Career-related* exams must provide the employee with the knowledge, skills or abilities to increase opportunity for advancement or career mobility within their current profession or in a career path for which there currently is a need in New York State government, such as nursing and accounting.

Questions frequently arise regarding the eligibility of exams leading to certificates or licenses in fields such as real estate, personal tax preparation, and self-help. In keeping with the requirement that the exam be job or career-related, exams in these areas will not be eligible for reimbursement unless the applicant can demonstrate that the subject matter is directly relevant to his or her job or career in New York State government.

The PDC maintains sole discretion for making the final determination on whether an exam is eligible for reimbursement. Documentation may be requested from the applicant's supervisor to assist in determining eligibility.

2. *Certification, Licensure, or Designation*

The exam must result in first time certification, licensure, or designation for an occupation that currently exists in New York State service. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- *Information Technology:* Exams for certification in specific software programs or hardware by corporations, such as Microsoft, Novell, and Oracle
- *Substance Abuse:* Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor written exams
- *Law:* New York State Bar exam
- *Finance:* Certified Public Accountant exam
- *Nursing:* Certification in specific nursing disciplines, such as psychiatry or forensics
- *Engineering:* Certification in specific engineering disciplines such as storm water management

3. *Provider Eligibility*

The certification, licensure, or designation must be awarded by an eligible provider who is defined by one or more of the following:

- Chartered, approved, or authorized by the New York State Board of Regents or an equivalent recognized body
- Licensed or registered by the New York State Education Department or an equivalent recognized accrediting body

- Licensed, registered, or approved by a department or agency of the State of New York to provide specific certification or licensing exams
- Certified computer or software corporations, such as Microsoft or Oracle, and authorized third parties who administer classes and certification exams on software, hardware, and other related information technology equipment
- Nationally recognized professional associations or their state or local chapters accredited to administer specific exams and award certification by the appropriate accrediting body
- Other providers may be approved at the sole discretion of the PDC

F. Application Time Period and Deadline

The CLEFR Program covers eligible expenses incurred for exams that begin during the period of January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023. All CLEFR applications and supporting documentation must be submitted within 90 days after the date of the exam. Applications for exams that began on or after January 1, 2023, and ended prior to March 20, 2023, must be submitted by June 19, 2023. The start date of the exam determines program year eligibility. The postmark or email date will be used to determine the timeliness of the application.

G. Release Time

The CLEFR Program does not entitle an employee to receive release time.

H. Expenses Covered

Eligible employees will be reimbursed for the cost of examinations for first time certification, licensure, and designations. Where an eligible employee, by virtue of work/professional experience and training, is permitted to seek evaluation of credentials in lieu of an examination, reimbursement of fees paid for this evaluation will be permitted provided the evaluation leads to initial certification, licensure, or designation in New York State and all other program requirements are met.

I. Expenses Not Covered

Costs and fees not reimbursed by this program include, but are not limited to:

- Civil Service exam fees
- Fees for renewing or maintaining existing certifications, licenses, and designations whether by application or re-examination
- Any fees that are not part of the examination fee (application, processing, academic fees, shipping fees)
- Study material (books, CDs, DVDs) and supplies
- Fees for exams leading to certification in a career that doesn't exist in New York State government
- Fees for exams leading to college credit for life experience
- Real estate licenses and certifications

J. Maximum Reimbursement

An applicant can receive reimbursements of up to \$1,100 per calendar year for the time period of January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023.

K. Alternative Sources of Financial Assistance

The CLEFR Program reimbursement will be secondary to any other financial assistance received. If the applicant receives assistance from any source, such as the agency, or a professional organization, the source and amount must be reported on the CLEFR application and on the paid invoice. This amount must be subtracted from the total reimbursement amount requested. An employee who fails to report the amount of assistance must repay the overpayment. These participants may be excluded from participating in future programs.

L. Taxation of Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursements

The IRS considers reimbursements under the Certification and Licensure Exam Fee Reimbursement Program to be taxable income. All reimbursements issued during the calendar year are reported to the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) during the month of October. The tax reports are based on the reimbursement check date. Once these reimbursements are reported, no further payments will be issued until after January 1 of the following calendar year.

At the end of each calendar year, OSC will withhold estimated taxes at the end of the calendar year. Employees should consult a tax expert with questions regarding taxation of these benefits (reimbursements). This may result in substantial withholding from paychecks at the end of the year and applicants should plan accordingly. The Office of Employee Relations (OER) cannot provide any tax clarification or advice.

M. Application and Reimbursement Process

For complete guidelines and printable application forms, go to <https://oer.ny.gov/public-employees-federation-afl-cio-pef> or contact OER at (518) 474-6612.

Step 1: Complete the Application Form

- Applications can only be submitted after successful completion of the exam. Applications submitted prior to the end date of the exam will not be accepted.
- Read the application and guidelines carefully and provide all the information required.
- All applications must be submitted within 90 calendar days after the end date of the exam. Failure to submit your application within the 90-day period may result in a denial. Applications for exams that began on or after January 1, 2023, and ended prior to March 20, 2023, must be submitted by June 19, 2023. The postmark or email date will be used to determine the timeliness of the application.
- The start date of the exam determines program year eligibility.
- Complete a separate CLEFR application for each exam.
- Please make sure the address on the application is current.

Step 2: Attach the Required Documentation

All supporting documentation must have the applicant's name printed on it by the issuing entity. Documentation must be in PDF format. All other formats (JPGs or other photo formats, Word Documents, links to documentation or websites, etc.) will not be accepted. Applicants should retain a copy of all documentation for their records.

Each of the following documents is required. They must be converted to PDF format and attached to the completed, signed, and dated reimbursement application:

- Documentation such as an unaltered invoice, receipt, or itemized account summary from the provider showing the exam registration cost separate from any additional fees
- Documentation with your name printed on it by the issuing entity showing the form of payment used, such as a copy of a valid receipt from the provider, bank statement, credit card statement, or front and back of cancelled check (If the receipt does not indicate how you paid the expense, you will need to submit additional documentation to show proof of payment)
- Documentation showing any financial assistance that has been received or will be received toward the cost of the exam indicating the name of the entity providing the assistance
- Documentation showing the date of the exam (month, day, and year)
- Documentation with your name printed on it by the provider confirming successful passing (license or certificate will not be accepted)

The CLEFR Program will not reimburse for incomplete or failed exams.

Applicants should retain a copy of all documentation for their records. If all required documentation is not received within 90 days after the end date of the course, your reimbursement request will be denied.

Please note: If you are unable to obtain the required documentation within 90-days from the end date of the exam, you must submit your application form and contact the PSTP Reimbursement Unit prior to the 90-day deadline.

Step 3: Submit the Application

Submit signed, dated application, and supporting documentation in one of the following ways:

- *Email:* Email the application and supporting documentation by the application deadline to psttraining@oer.ny.gov. All documentation must be in PDF format. All other formats (JPGs or other photo formats, Word documents, links to documentation or websites, etc.) will not be accepted.
- *U.S. Mail:* Mail the application and supporting documentation, postmarked by the application deadline, to:

NYS Office of Employee Relations
PSTP Reimbursement Unit, 7th Floor
2 Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12223-1250

Step 4: Application Status

The following notifications will be sent via email. Accordingly, please be sure all applications include a valid email address.

- *Notification of Receipt:* Notification will be sent that the application has been received.
- *Notification of Review:* Notification will be sent that the application is being reviewed.
- *Notification of Hold:* Applicants will be notified when additional information is needed or supporting documentation has not been received. Failure to provide the required documentation may result in denial of your reimbursement request.
- *Notification of Denial:* Applicants will be notified when their application has been denied and why. If the request is denied for reasons such as ineligible or incomplete application, the applicant may resubmit the claim for reimbursement with additional documentation, as long as the applicant is still within 90 days after the completion date of the requested exam. Applicants will have 30 days from the date of the denial to appeal the decision for any other reason(s). The denial appeal may contain additional supporting documentation and a letter from the supervisor.
- *Notification of Approval:* Applicants will be notified when the application has been approved for payment.

Step 5: Receive Reimbursement

Once an application has been approved, reimbursement checks will be mailed from the Office of the State Comptroller to the employee's home address. This check will resemble a paycheck or travel expense check, tear away three sides in order to open the check. This is a live check and is not automatically deposited. Please allow up to four weeks for check processing and delivery.

Please make sure the address on the application is current.

It is the policy of the State of New York to provide for and promote equal opportunity in employment and equal access to all programs and services without discrimination on the basis of age, race, color, creed, national origin, military status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability (including pregnancy-related disability or condition), predisposing genetic characteristics, marital/familial status, status as a victim of domestic violence, or prior arrest/criminal conviction record.