

FBA education fund

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

The FBA Education Fund Coordinator has put together a *Frequently Asked Questions* guide to help members with general information. Please forward your questions to fbaeducfund@heu.org, and watch for ongoing updates on this page.

If my application is approved, when will I receive money?

(also see “How long does the application approval process take?”)

Please note that while applications may be approved, no costs can be reimbursed until the funds are transferred from government to the FBA Education Fund. This may take until the summer of 2010.

What if the FBA Education Fund doesn't cover all my costs?

The FBA Education Fund will **not** cover all costs, particularly for long-term training. For other funding sources, applicants should check the following:

- the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education's government student loans and grants (see popular topics) including the Nurses Education Bursary (www.aved.gov.bc.ca/studentaidbc);
- the Financial Aid office at their training institution for information on government loans and bursaries and internal college bursaries, and
- their union to see if there are bursaries.

Will my benefits be covered?

If you are receiving employer-paid extended health, dental and medical benefits, you are covered for the first 20 days of leave.

The FBA Education Fund Committee was unable to get province-wide agreement from the health authorities to pay the costs of continuous medical, dental and extended health benefits for members on extended training leave. However, some health authorities have indicated they are prepared to consider maintaining benefits. Members should request continued coverage from their employer.

If the employer will not continue benefits after 20 days' leave, a member may purchase benefits (approximately \$20 per day). Members should speak to their payroll/benefits department for more information or to make arrangements.

Will everyone who meets the criteria receive funding?

There is \$1.25 million in the 2010–2012 facilities subsector collective agreement for training. There are more than 38,000 health care workers eligible to apply for the funding.

The FBA Education Fund Committee has set policy that regional, occupational and union distribution may be considered in approving applications. *Please note that submitting an application does not mean that approval of funds is guaranteed.*

How long does the application approval process take?

Please note that while applications may be approved, no costs can be reimbursed until the funds are transferred from government to the FBA Education Fund. This may take until the summer of 2010.

The approval process may take up to five weeks, depending on how many applications are being received and the completeness of the application information. Short-term training applications are reviewed on a continuous basis.

The first long-term training application deadline is **June 18, 2010**. No long-term applications will be approved before the deadline. Advising applicants of a decision may take up to five weeks.

For quick approval and/or information on the status of an application, make sure all the requested information is sent with your application.

Mail the original application, signed *in ink*. Send a completed *Confirmation of Employee Status and Leave Approval Form* – **required** for all applications even if leave is not taken. Send a course description, along with a confirmation or registration letter giving the course name, date(s), fees and copies of any payments made for fees or other course costs. *Providing all this information with the application makes the review process easy.*

What can be covered under course costs?

The Fund covers course costs – such as student fees, books/materials – and **may include** costs such as additional licensing exam fees, Criminal Record Check, First Aid, etc. (*see short-term and long-term criteria for maximum funding amounts*).

Is more than \$1,200 in funding available for longer, higher cost, part-time, correspondence online courses?

The FBA Education Fund Committee recognizes that there are some more expensive, longer term, part-time/distance programs.

Part-time/distance programs leading to a certificate/diploma or degree – that if available and taken full-time would require more than 20 days' unpaid leave – **may be eligible for up to \$2,400** in course costs.

Examples of such programs include:

- Purchasing Management Association of Canada courses (PMAC – CPP);
- Nursing Unit Clerk certificate (part-time or distance), and
- Medical Transcription certificate (part-time or distance).

Note: If more than 20 days of unpaid leave is required, the training is likely to be long-term.

Will the FBA Education Fund pay additional costs for people from rural and remote areas?

Applications from members living in rural and remote areas requesting additional funding will be considered on an individual basis. However, members should be aware that the funding is very limited.

The FBA Education Fund Committee has set policy on additional costs. Costs **do not** include bus fare, gas, mileage or parking in areas where local public transportation is available. Travel expenses **will be considered** where **longer travel** is required (i.e. Castlegar to Kelowna; ferry from Victoria to Vancouver; accommodations). Members must provide details about travel expenses.

Is other funding available for training?

Dedicated training funds were negotiated for workers, displaced due to contracting out, as well as for care aides and licensed practical nurses.

Joint Re-training Fund (for displaced workers): Employees who are displaced as a result of contracting out should contact their local shop steward and/or union servicing representative for information on accessing re-training funds. Impacted workers may also contact the **Joint Re-training Fund** directly at 604-456-7184 (or toll-free: 1-877-476-7184, or email at <jointbill29retraining@heu.org>.

B.C. Health Education Foundation (for care aides and licensed practical nurses): The 2010–2012 facilities subsector collective agreement includes a provision for a dedicated funding stream for care aides and LPNs for short-term skills upgrading and post-basic education.

This money will be made available through the Chief Nursing Officer in each health authority. To access this funding, the Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA), the Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC) and the health authorities must apply to the B.C. Health Education Foundation. Once this funding is secured from the Foundation, care aides and LPNs will be expected to access training in their own occupation (i.e. either skills upgrading or post-basic education) through the B.C. Health Education Foundation. This funding is likely to come on stream in the fall of 2010.

Care aides and LPNs are eligible for funding through the FBA Education Fund for long-term training to move into a new occupation within the FBA (i.e. for a care aide to become an LPN, or an LPN to become a nursing unit assistant).

What funding is available for members displaced due to contracting out who need training?

Employees who are displaced as a result of contracting out should contact their local shop steward and/or union servicing representative for information on accessing re-training funds. Impacted workers may also contact the **Joint Re-training Fund** directly at 604-456-7184 (or toll-free: 1-877-476-7184, or email at <jointbill29retrainingfund@heu.org>.

Are FBA casual employees eligible for the FBA Education Fund?

Casual employees covered under the 2010–2012 Health Services and Support Facilities Subsector collective agreement may be eligible for the FBA Education Fund.

The FBA Education Fund Committee has set policy that a casual employee must have completed 488 hours of work to be eligible for the FBA Education Fund. If a casual employee is requesting the equivalent of unpaid LOA to attend training, then the employee will need to submit payroll proof of hours and shifts worked in the six months before the FBA Education Fund application date so that, if approved, a training allowance can be calculated.

Why are Community Health, Community Social Services and independent contract employees not eligible for the FBA Education Fund?

The FBA Education Fund was negotiated for health care workers in acute and long-term care locals in the facilities subsector collective agreement.

Is semester-based training or course-by-course, part-time training that started before *April 1, 2010* eligible for funding?

The FBA Education Fund Committee set policy that states training must begin April 1, 2010, or later. This means that Day 1, Course 1, Semester 1, Year 1 must begin April 1, 2010, or later.

Because the funds in the 2006–2010 facilities contract ran out in June 2009, the FBA Education Fund Committee has set policy that training started between June 1, 2009 and March 31, 2010 that is ongoing past April 1, 2010 may be eligible for funding. Only costs for those months after April 1, 2010 will be reimbursed, if the training application is approved.

For example: a Licensed Practical Nursing training program that began in September 2009 and is ongoing in April 2010 may be eligible, but only costs after April 1, 2010 would be reimbursed. An Accounting course or Acute Care Skills training that started and completed between June 1, 2009 and March 31, is not eligible.

Do members have to pay up front for the course or training program?

No, although an institution may require a small fee to go on the program list. A member may send a letter from the institution that confirms entry to the training program, the start and end dates, and the costs of the program. Institutions should be able to provide this letter since a similar letter is already in use for Skills Development programs.

Generally, with short-term courses, it's simpler for members to pay and submit copies of receipts (or originals). With long-term training, it may be possible for the FBA Education Fund to do a sponsor letter for an approved application, if there's a reasonable timeframe.

It is important to remember that submitting an FBA Education Fund application form does not guarantee approval or that funds will be available.

Is it best to apply for the maximum amount of funding if a training program has a number of parts and each part is paid separately?

FBA members are eligible for one round of funding for **both** short-term training and long-term training. Members may re-apply, but will only be funded after first-time applicants have been processed.

If you are in a program that requires registration and payment course-by-course, it's best to apply for the maximum funding in one application.

For example: You are taking Program A, which has four courses. Program A is six months in duration, part-time and each course costs \$300. You are not taking any leave from work, but need funding for courses and materials. Providing you meet all the criteria for short-term training, you could receive a maximum amount of \$1,200 for the entire program.

When you pass Course 1, you will send your proof of completion to the FBA office and confirmation of entry into Course 2. At that time, you will receive \$300. This would continue for the other two courses to the \$1,200 maximum for the program.

What is the training allowance?

The training allowance is intended to support wages lost while a member is on approved unpaid leave to attend training days.

How is the training allowance calculated and paid?

The FBA Education Fund Committee has set policy that the maximum training allowance is \$100 per training day for a regular full-time employee (1.0 FTE). For a regular part-time employee or a casual employee, the training allowance is pro-rated according to the FTE.

Part of the FBA Education Fund application is the *Confirmation of Employee Status/Leave Form*. The employer must complete this form (whether or not unpaid LOA is required) and provide the FTE for a regular employee (i.e. 1.0, 0.65, 0.5). The employer will also be asked to confirm that a casual employee has completed 488 hours of work. The casual employee will also need to submit payroll proof of hours and shifts worked in the six months before making the application to the FBA Education Fund.

Below are some examples based on a full-time Resident Care Aide program: 110 days in length; September 2010–January 2011. These training allowances might be part of approved applications:

- FT regular (1.0 FTE): 110 days x \$100/day = \$11,000
- PT regular (0.65 FTE): 110 days x \$100/day x 0.65 = \$7,150
- FT hours = 975 hours according to the facilities collective agreement (12 months: 1,950 hours = 1.0 FTE; six months = 1,950/2 = 975 hours)
- Casual employee with proof of FT hours (975 hrs): 110 days x \$100/day = \$11,000
- Casual employee with proof of PT hours (487.5 hrs): 110 days x \$100/day x 0.5 FTE = \$5,500 (487.5/975 = 50% or 0.5 FTE)

The FBA Education Fund Coordinator calculates the training allowance and sets out a training allowance schedule based on the actual number of training days in the program. The training allowance is paid at the end of every two months, based on proof of attendance (a form is sent to the member that is signed by the instructor). In the September 2010–January 2011 example above, the training allowance would be paid at the end of October (Sept/Oct), before the Christmas break (Nov/Dec), and at the end of the program in January 2011. The training allowance is not paid for stat holidays, program breaks (Christmas), etc.

If a member is approved for funding and then advised that the training has been cancelled because of lack of registration, can the approval still apply for the next program intake?

Yes, the approval will still apply *if funds are available*. The FBA Education Fund office may do a quick second review (i.e. re-affirm employment status and leave approval dates; confirm new course dates/costs). Because the FBA Education Fund is limited, funds can no longer be reserved if a program is cancelled. An application can be held on file and given priority if funds are available when the program does begin.

Can funding be approved for training with a start date six months or more in the future?

Funding may be approved when the institution provides written confirmation of the course or training, with the start and end dates, and the costs. This could be helpful to members on waitlists at public institutions.

An example: If an FBA member wants to become an LPN and is registered to begin a course in January 2011, the member can apply to the FBA Education Fund – with a confirmation letter from the institution of the start date. If the FBA application is approved, funding can be allocated for that member for the January 2011 training. Funds are not committed while a member is on a waitlist.

What are the waitlists for getting into public institution training programs?

Waitlists for public institution training programs vary across the province. The FBA Education Fund Committee encourages members to check and compare waitlists at other colleges in, or near, your region and/or explore distance learning opportunities through Thompson Rivers University – Open Learning <www.tru.ca/distance.html>.

Why will the FBA Education Fund only cover training from public institutions and industry-specific required certification (i.e. Purchasing Agent)?

The FBA Education Fund Committee has several reasons for the “public institution” policy:

- the unions support public education;
- the **private** institutions are generally much more expensive than **public** institutions;
- in many cases, public institutions will not accept certification from private training institutions when members want to upgrade;
- a majority of employers are reporting that the training standards at private institutions do not meet their requirements, and
- the differences in training standards are often in length and depth of courses, and duration of practical training (i.e. direct patient care).

Can the FBA Education Fund assist members who choose private institutions because of waitlists at public institutions (i.e. LPN waitlists) and where the employer will accept the private training institute credentials?

The FBA Education Fund Committee has decided not to provide funding for training at **private** institutions (*see previous question*).

The FBA Education Fund Committee will work with employers and public institutions to address waitlist and skills shortage issues (i.e. LPNs). The committee will consider options like group training and distance learning.

Where can I find a list of public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia?

A list of public, post-secondary institutions can be found at:
<www.aved.gov.bc.ca/institutions/welcome.htm>.

School District Continuing Education divisions may also offer eligible programs.

Will the FBA Education Fund provide a training allowance when a member has chosen to attend a private training institute?

The FBA Education Fund Committee has decided **not** to provide the training allowance because the Fund does not support training at private institutions (*see previous question “Why will the FBA Education Fund only cover training from public institutions?”*).