

Customs and Border Protection Tuition Assistance Program (CBP-TAP) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is the CBP Tuition Assistance Program (CBP-TAP)?

The CBP Tuition Assistance Program (CBP-TAP) offers tuition assistance to CBP employees. CBP-TAP is a means for CBP to invest in the continued education of employees who are committed to improving their contributions to the agency. CBP-TAP provides such employees the opportunity to apply for tuition assistance at accredited colleges or universities. The Assistant Commissioner, Office of Training and Development, is responsible for administering the CBP-TAP.

Who is eligible for the program?

All permanent, full-time, career CBP employees, regardless of geographic location are eligible to apply. The program is announced to all eligible CBP employees agency-wide.

How is the program structured?

CBP-TAP will start for the summer term, and will be offered three times per year; fall, spring, and summer terms. Courses must be taken at an accredited college or university. To further encourage education delivered by non-traditional methods, applications will also be accepted for distance learning courses offered at accredited universities or colleges via the Internet, correspondence, etc. For more information on accreditation, see the list of accredited schools listed on the CBP-TAP website.

What is the selection process?

The Assistant Commissioner, OTD, is responsible for ensuring that the policy aspects of this program are implemented. A CBP-TAP Review Board, appointed by the Assistant Commissioner, OTD, will review and evaluate all applications. Evaluation criteria will include course applicability to the employee's current position, career progression, requirements and priorities of CBP, completeness of the application package, and the narrative responses justifying the request. The results and recommendations will be given to the Assistant Commissioner, OTD, who will make the final selections.

When should the recipients take the course?

Recipients are to attend classes on *personal time*. Employees participating must still be available for overtime. Approval will be contingent upon a determination that participation will not negatively impact mission accomplishment and operational needs, including the scheduling of work and overtime assignments of the employee or other employees in his/her work location.

How should I apply?

Employees should scan their application materials and email them to CBP-TAP@dhs.gov. We understand that not every office has access to a scanner. In this case, it is best to fax the pages that require a signature, and email the others. This cuts down on the number of faxed pages. In the past, the fax machine has run virtually continuously toward the end of the application period, and applications have been left unreceived. It is advisable to apply early. Applicants can send in their materials by mail to: CBP-TAP, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Room 5.3-57, Washington DC 20229. If you will send you materials by mail, please ensure they are in the CBP-TAP office by the closing date.

What role does the supervisor play in the program?

Supervisors will be expected to review the employee's application and indicate whether they would or would not recommend the training, whether the training is related to the employee's position, and whether it would be beneficial to the employee and the agency. In addition, supervisors will be responsible for obtaining documentation from participating employees demonstrating that they passed the course.

How much assistance can I receive?

The program has not been offered in a few years, and amounts will depend on participation. The amounts received in previous iterations of this program are no guarantee of future funding. Participants should expect to pay the difference if course costs exceed the amount awarded. We expect demand to be strong for the program.

How is the program funded?

The Office of Training and Development centrally funds tuition. Books, travel, miscellaneous expenses are *not* funded. The program may also partially fund tuition based on costs and volume of applications for the program. If a participant's tuition is partially funded, the remaining cost must be paid by the participant.

May I use tuition assistance in conjunction with another award or assistance?

Tuition assistance may be used in conjunction with another award as long as the total amount of awards received for one class does not exceed the class total cost. In no instance may an employee receive CBP-TAP assistance in lieu of another award to make a financial gain. For example; a course costs \$2000 and you already have an award from your institution that pays for \$1500 of the course. You would only be eligible for \$500 of CBP-TAP assistance. Additional award disclosure is mandatory for the program.

What are the completion requirements?

Participants must complete the course with a passing grade to fulfill the requirements for receiving tuition assistance. A passing mark in a graded course is C or better, and in pass/fail

classes, a pass must be received. CBP reserves the right to recover the cost of a course should an employee not maintain a passing grade, drop the course, or leave the agency before the required amount of continued service. Recipients are required to sign a Standard Form 182, "Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training".

I have read something about TRAEN and entering my class into this system, what is TRAEN?

TRAEN is the system that CBP uses to capture all of the training taken by its employees. It is a mechanism to track courses and expenses by various criteria. Upon completion of your course you must have your office TRAEN registrar enter the course into the TRAEN system.

What is the window to submit applications?

The dates for the program are listed on the CBP-TAP website, at http://cbpnetsecure.cbp.dhs.gov/sites/otd/wfdd/os/tap/Pages/CBP_Welcome.aspx They will also be posted in the announcement.

When do I find out if I am awarded tuition assistance?

Successful applicants will be notified in the beginning of May for the summer 2008 term. Unsuccessful applicants will also be notified on this date with the reason they were not selected to receive funding.

How do I pay for my class?

Awardees will receive their SF-182 back, signed and coded. Take the form to the institution to make payment. The institution will then send the form to CBP for payment. Should you have any questions concerning using the SF-182 for payment, or your institution has any concerns, please direct your questions to Ms. Valerie Manley, at 202-344-2391, or valerie.d.manley@dhs.gov.

What are the limitations on this program?

An employee may receive assistance for one course per CBP-TAP announcement and no more than three courses per calendar year. CBP-TAP funding may only be applied to courses taken at accredited institutions. Awards made under CBP-TAP are subject to available funding. If CBP-TAP provides a partial payment of the requested tuition request and the employee chooses to take the class, the employee is responsible for paying the remaining tuition from their own funds. It is also important for you to stress in your application how the course you wish to take will benefit CBP as well as your immediate career goals, and current job duties.

What are my continued service requirements for being awarded tuition assistance?

Regardless of level of funding, award recipients are required to sign pages 4 and 5 of the SF-182, continued service agreement. The agreement states that employees will continue working for

CBP as a full-time, direct-hire for three times as long as the length of the class being paid for. In most instances, this will equate one year of continued service with CBP.

Where can I get additional information about the CBP Tuition Assistance Program?

Contact the Office of Training and Development:

Heather Arold

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