

DATE: November 30, 2021

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Funds for 2022-2023 Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program

ORIGINATOR: Angela Anderson, Chief Human Resources Officer, Human Resources

RESOURCE STAFF: Trish Kolotyluk, Renée Thomson

ISSUE

An allocation of funds from the 2022-2023 operating budget is requested to support the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program, through which exempt staff would be able to access tuition and leave support for post-secondary coursework. An allocation of funds to support this program is an investment that benefits our Division and builds capacity in our staff. This request for a commitment of funds is made well in advance of the distribution of the funds to accommodate application and post-secondary admission processes.

BACKGROUND

Edmonton Public Schools recognizes that professional development for staff is a critical aspect in supporting successful outcomes for students, as well as for succession planning. The Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program is in direct support of Division Priority 2, Goal 3, which states that throughout their careers, all staff members are to be “provided opportunities to enhance their professional capacity and leadership within a culture of collaboration.”

As one of five staff groups in the Division, exempt staff have the opportunity to apply for tuition and leave support through the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program to participate in professional improvement activities that are aligned with the Division’s Priorities and areas of need. A comparison of successful applicants by year (Attachment I), as well as a synopsis of funds and support granted over the past few years (Attachment II) are included in this report.

In order to facilitate application, review and approval processes for this program, it is necessary that they be initiated well in advance of the period of support (Attachment III).

RELATED FACTS

- The Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program is aligned with the Division’s Priorities and Cornerstone Values.
- The program ensures that exempt staff members across the Division have access to opportunities that would serve to enhance their professional capacity and allow them to stay current with industry standards and trends.
- Support for professional development assists in the attraction of exempt staff to the Division and in the retention of those employees.

- Exempt staff have the opportunity to apply for support in January for courses that take place between July 1, 2022, and August 31, 2023, or in September for courses that take place between December 1, 2022, and August 31, 2023 (Attachment III).
- The application process for this program is rigorous. Assessment of applications is completed by a committee of Division leadership staff who consider the alignment of applicants' proposed professional improvement plans with Division Priorities and identified needs. Additional considerations are the anticipated benefits to the Division, as well as connections to the applicants' professional growth plans and career goals.
- For the 2021-2022 Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program, requests for support from exempt staff varied as greatly as their roles in the Division.
- It has been an administrative practice to maintain a holdback of a portion of the allocation to address potential increases to leave allowance costs and tuition fees in the next academic year, as well as potential fluctuations in the exchange rate for tuition fees paid to international post-secondary institutions.
- The Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program is one way that professional learning is supported for Division staff. The chart below outlines sources of support for professional learning.

Funds for Professional Learning	Details
School and Decision Unit Budgets	Funds are allocated for staff professional learning within schools and decision units.
Decision Units	Central decision units allocate funds for the delivery of targeted professional learning courses and sessions for staff. These include sessions offered through Instructional Supports, Technology and Information Management and Human Resources, among others.
Division Programs: Professional Improvement Program	Tuition and leave support is available to teachers through the Professional Improvement Program for post-secondary coursework aligned with the Division's Strategic Plan.
Bursaries and Scholarships	Staff are encouraged to explore bursary and scholarship opportunities through their post-secondary institution, the provincial government and other community organizations

RECOMMENDATION

That an allocation of \$140,000 from the 2022-2023 operating budget be approved for the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program for the purpose of granting professional improvement leaves and tuition support to exempt staff for the 2022-2023 school year.

OPTIONS

Based on the information provided in this report, the following options are considered most appropriate:

1. The allocation of funds for 2022-2023 remains at \$140,000.
2. The allocation of funds for 2022-2023 is decreased to \$130,000.

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

Based on the number of applications we have received over the past few years, as well as the number of exempt staff in the Division, it is anticipated that maintaining the allocation of funds for this program at the current level would adequately cover the requests for support in 2022-2023.

A selection of statements from staff members who were granted support through the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program has been included with this report (Attachment IV). Program participants reflected on the benefits of their professional learning and how it has been effectively integrated into their work responsibilities.

While post-secondary professional learning is critical to building staff capacity and supporting student learning, we acknowledge the current economic climate. In 2021-2022, the allocation of funds was reduced by \$10,000 (6.7 per cent) over the previous year (Attachment I). We continue to see strong demand for support through the Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program and note that post-secondary institution tuition costs are increasing. For these reasons, Option 1, which would maintain the allocation of funds for this program at the current level, is considered most appropriate.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of this recommendation, the program timelines for both the January and September application intakes will be implemented (Attachment III).

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I	Comparison by Year: Total Number of Applicants and Number of Successful Applicants
ATTACHMENT II	Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program History
ATTACHMENT III	2022-2023 Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program Timelines
ATTACHMENT IV	Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation

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EXEMPT STAFF PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

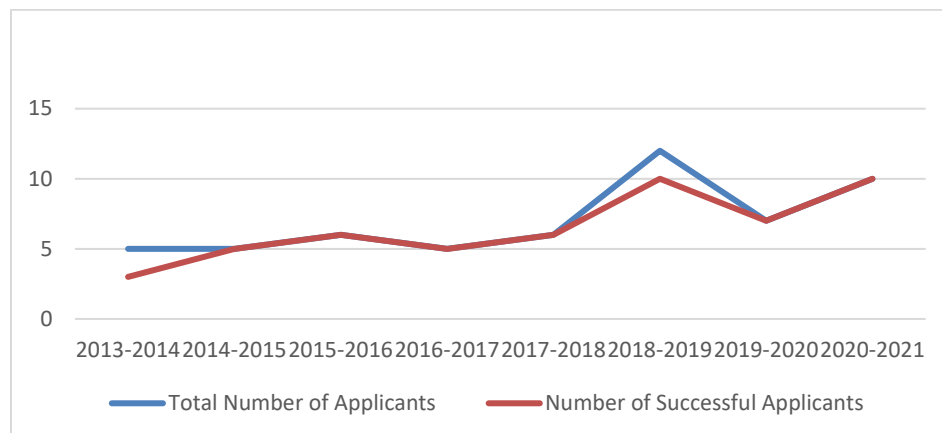
**COMPARISON BY YEAR: TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS AND
NUMBER OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS**

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS	NUMBER SUCCESSFUL
2013-2014 ¹	5	3
2014-2015 ¹	5	5
2015-2016 ¹	6	6
2016-2017 ²	5	5
2017-2018	6	6
2018-2019	12	10
2019-2020	7	7
2020-2021	10	10
2021-2022	11	11

¹ Applications from exempt staff were assessed using processes outlined in the Teachers' Collective Agreement.

² The Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program was established.

COMPARISON BY YEAR: TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS AND NUMBER OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS*



EXEMPT STAFF PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM HISTORY

YEAR	APPROVED ALLOCATION	APPROVED TOTAL LEAVE FTE	ACTUAL GRANTED FOR LEAVES	ACTUAL GRANTED FOR TUITION	TOTAL ACTUAL GRANTED FOR LEAVES & TUITION
2016-2017	\$150,000	1.467	\$106,861	\$35,585	\$142,446
2017-2018	\$150,000	0.644	\$47,129	\$39,304	\$86,433
2018-2019	\$150,000	0.600	\$47,147	\$52,902	\$100,049
2019-2020	\$150,000	0.440	\$32,699	\$37,730	\$70,429
2020-2021	\$150,000	1.000	\$67,572	\$30,450	\$98,022
2021-2022	\$140,000	0.216	\$19,564	\$53,327	\$72,891

2022-2023 PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TIMELINE

JANUARY 2022 APPLICATION INTAKE

(for courses that take place between July 1, 2022 and August 31, 2023)

Activity	Date
Exempt Professional Improvement Program announced on Division Staff News and application package available on Connect	October 29
Information meeting for interested staff (4:00 - 6:00 p.m., Google Meet)	December 2
Due date for applications	January 7
Processing of applications	January 10 - 31
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt of applications confirmed • Background information compiled (previous leaves, degrees, grid placement, years of service, summary of request, projected costs) • Applications prepared for review by committee of leadership staff 	
Review of applications	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application packages prepared for committee review • Committee workshop conducted • Review of applications completed 	January 10 – February 7 February 8 February 15
Compile background information with input from assessors	February 15 – March 4
Recommendation submitted for approval	March 7
Approval of leaves and tuition support	March 14
Communication of support granted	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants notified; letters and agreements sent to successful applicants • TM to Board • Division Staff News announcement 	March 15 - 18 March 23 March 25

2022-2023 PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM TIMELINE

SEPTEMBER 2022 APPLICATION INTAKE

(for courses that take place between December 1, 2022 and August 31, 2023)

Activity	Date
Due date for applications	September 23
Processing of applications	September 26-30
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Receipt of applications confirmed• Background information compiled (previous leaves, degrees, grid placement, years of service, summary of request, projected costs)• Applications prepared for review by committee of leadership staff	
Review of applications	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Application packages prepared for committee review• Review of applications completed	October 3-7 October 14
Compile background information with input from assessors	October 3-7
Recommendation submitted for approval	October 19
Approval of leaves and tuition support	October 26
Communication of support granted	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applicants notified; letters and agreements sent to successful applicants• TM to Board• Division Staff News announcement	October 27 - 28 November 7 November 9

**Selection of Reflective Statements: Benefits of Program Participation
2020-2021 Exempt Staff Professional Improvement Program**

Husna Foda – Student Information Analyst, Technology and Information Management

Northern Alberta Institute of Technology - Certificate in Project Management

“I believe that the Division will greatly benefit from my professional improvement. I will use the soft skills I have gained to engage my teammates better, the communication skills I have learned to open the doors between departments that have historically worked in “silos”, and the technical skills I have mastered to create a better future for all students who attend Edmonton Public Schools.”

Kendall Schultz – Occupational Therapy Consultant, Specialized Learning Supports

University of Alberta - Certificate in Teaching Students with Complex Communication Needs through the Faculty of Education

“I now have a greater understanding of the conditions for learning that need to be in place to support literacy learning to occur. I understand the importance of language and literacy for students with complex communication needs and the importance that knowledgeable others play in creating a language accessible environment. I have learned the different communicative functions that we should be modelling, and I have learned evidence-based practices. This will make me a more holistic, effective, and competent consultant that can support teachers and educational assistants in adopting a mindset where communication is valued and where they have practical strategies they can utilize to promote the development of communication and language. This will be very impactful for the students we serve as having enhanced communication can support literacy learning, reduce challenging behaviours, and enhance social interaction and connections.”

Kristy Rowe – Inventory Coordinator, Distribution Centre

University of Alberta - Faculty of Extension - Diploma in Supply Chain Management

“Upon completion of the Supply Chain Management Diploma Program, I have obtained an abundance of additional skills, knowledge and experiences related to my career. One of the largest learnings I have taken away was “the whole picture effect”, from sourcing of raw material to accounting/finance, and everything in between. Understanding and being aware of all the different departments and processes will significantly aid in risk mitigation throughout our Supply Chain Organization. With this schooling I am now able to recognize the in-efficiencies throughout our day to day processes and from there I can identify a solution and work towards improving/resolving the issues we face.”

Linda McFalls – Social Worker Consultant, Specialized Learning Supports

University of Alberta - Doctor of Philosophy in Secondary Education

“Whereas contemporary leadership literature concentrates on personality/trait theory and leadership style (e.g. situational leadership, path-goal analysis), later leadership theory is directed towards the integration of the relational aspects of leadership. With the support of EPSB PIP, I am able to contribute to the knowledge and development of others, including EPSB school leaders.”

Lisa Kalis – Speech Language Pathology Consultant, Specialized Learning Supports

University of Alberta - Certificate in Teaching Students with Complex Communication Needs through the Faculty of Education

“The rich learning and assignments that required me to reflect deeply on my practice, as well as the opportunity to interact with others who have different perspectives and experiences related to this work, helped me grow and discover new ways to support, coach and collaborate with students, their families and the educational team. I know more about research-based practice in teaching students with

Complex Communication Needs. But, as importantly, I am also a more compassionate and understanding clinician and collaborative teammate as a result of my learning and experiences in this course.”

Shaminder Parmar – Planner, Infrastructure Planning

Thompson Rivers University - Master of Business Administration

“In my supply chain management course I learned many valuable tools that I will be able to apply to my work in the Division. The first is the ability to assess the strategic role and impact of IT technologies on the integration of supply chains. Secondly, I was able to learn how to identify the major slacks in supply chains and formulate customized approaches to manage them. Finally, I learned to support the application of the adaptive supply chain to emergency planning (where extreme events may cause supply chains to experience intense strain). In my research methods course, I learned how to critically think about business problems and then apply various methods of approaching these problems. I also improved my skills in being able to transform data into stories and information, and calculate and interpret descriptive statistics. Finally, I improved my presentation and report writing skills, which will allow me to develop improved capital planning documents for the Division.”

Sheelin Chandra – Executive Assistant, Human Resources

University of Fredericton - Executive Master of Business Administration with a specialization in Human Resources Leadership

“This will allow me to do my work as effectively and efficiently as possible which will contribute to success within the HR department and my overall service to Edmonton Public Schools. I value learning the leadership skills to build maximum team capacity and support high performance.”