

FBA education fund

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

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. However, the long-term training package has information on other funding sources to investigate – including the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education's Health Care and Nurses Education bursaries, the FBA/Vancity Education Loan Program, and government student loans and grants.

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?

The short answer is yes – until the \$5 million Education Fund is gone.

Short-term training applications are accepted on a continuous basis. The target is to fund about 50 members in each application deadline for long-term training – this means about 350 members will receive funding from the November 2006 to October 2008 deadlines.

The Committee will also give consideration to regional and occupational distribution. There's also a priority waitlist in place. If an applicant meets the criteria but is not funded because the intake for that period has been met, then that applicant will be given priority funding in the next intake (*provided the member still meets the criteria*).

HOW LONG DOES THE APPLICATION APPROVAL PROCESS TAKE?

The approval process may take up to five weeks for short-term applications, depending on how many applications are received and the completeness of the application information.

Long-term applications are held for specific deadlines: **June 15, 2007; October 18, 2007; March 13, 2008; June 19, 2008** and **October 16, 2008**. The earlier an application is submitted, the better.

For quick approval and/or information on the status of an application, make sure all 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?

In April 2007, the FBA Education Fund Committee recognized that there are some more expensive, longer term, part-time/distance programs.

Retroactive to September 1, 2006, 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.

ARE LPNs ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING FROM THE FBA EDUCATION FUND?

LPNs are eligible for short-term training opportunities, provided they meet the funding criteria.

If there's another source of funding for specific training (i.e. Nursing Directorate for LPN Leadership Skills Program), members must first apply to that funding source.

For long-term training, licensed practical nurses have a dedicated fund – the *B.C. Health Education Foundation* – within each health authority and available to affiliates for continuing education and specialty training. Information is available with the FBA Education Fund long-term training package, and LPNs can contact their Nurse Leader or immediate supervisor for more details about this fund.

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 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.

To resolve some of the travel issues, the Committee is currently working on options such as distance learning programs through Thompson Rivers University – Open Learning <www.openlearning.tru.ca> and group training programs.

WHAT FUNDING IS AVAILABLE FOR DISPLACED MEMBERS WHO NEED TRAINING?

Regular FBA members who are displaced and **within** their recall period may be eligible for the FBA Education Fund. More importantly, displaced FBA members may be eligible for *Employment Insurance* (EI) training funds, which provide more support than the FBA Education Fund.

Members should contact their nearest Service Canada Centre <www.hrsdc.gc.ca> or email the FBA Education Fund office at fbaeducfund@heu.org for assistance.

WHY ARE FBA CASUAL EMPLOYEES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE FBA EDUCATION FUND?

The *Transfer Agreement* letter from the employers in the 2006-2010 Health Services and Support Facilities Subsector collective agreement says clearly, “Ministry funding is provided to FBA to provide assistance to regular employees...”.

WHY ARE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES 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 SEPTEMBER 1, 2006 ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING?

The FBA Education Fund Committee set policy that states training must begin September 1, 2006 or later. This means that Day #1, Course #1, Semester #1, Year #1 **must begin September 1, 2006 or later**.

*For example, training or studies in Semester #3 that started September 1, 2006 is not eligible. A training program that started Year #2 on September 1, 2006 is not eligible. In both of these examples, Day #1 of Course #1 was **before** September 1, 2006.*

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.

At the same time, a member who began training from September 1, 2006 onward **may** be reimbursed for course costs, if the member meets all the FBA Education Fund criteria. You will need to submit an FBA Education Fund Application Form.

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 and long-term training. Members may re-apply for additional course funding, 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 next two courses to the \$1,200 maximum for the program.

IF A MEMBER IS APPROVED FOR FUNDING AND THEN ADVISED THAT THE TRAINING DOES NOT HAVE SEATS AVAILABLE OR HAS BEEN CANCELLED BECAUSE OF LACK OF REGISTRATION, CAN THE APPROVAL STILL APPLY FOR THE NEXT PROGRAM INTAKE?

Yes, the approval will still apply. 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).

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 September 2007, the member can apply to the FBA Education Fund – with a confirmation letter of the start date. If the FBA application is approved, funding can be allocated for that member for the September 2007 training.

WHAT ARE THE WAITLISTS FOR GETTING INTO PUBLIC INSTITUTION TRAINING PROGRAMS?

Waitlists for public institution training programs vary across the province. In some cases, there are open seats. For example: In the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, there are ongoing spaces available for Resident Care Attendant (RCA) training.

In other instances, there are long waitlists and limited course availability. The FBA Education Fund Committee is looking at the possibility of funding group training.

In the meantime, the 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.openlearning.tru.ca>.

If you want to notify the Committee about course availability issues, please contact the FBA Education Fund office at fbaeducfund@heu.org.

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 in 2007 to address waitlist and skills shortage issues (i.e. LPNs). The Committee will consider options like group training and distance learning.

IS THERE 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?”*).