

HDOT Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) Scholarship Program Policy and Guidelines

Program Overview

Scholarships are available through the State of Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT) for rural transit operators to offset expenses related to training events, seminars, workshops, and conferences. Key objectives of the program are to promote safe and effective delivery of public transportation in rural areas; to support coordination of public, private, specialized, and human service transportation services; to facilitate peer-to-peer self-help through the development of local networks of transit professionals; and to make more efficient use of public and private resources.

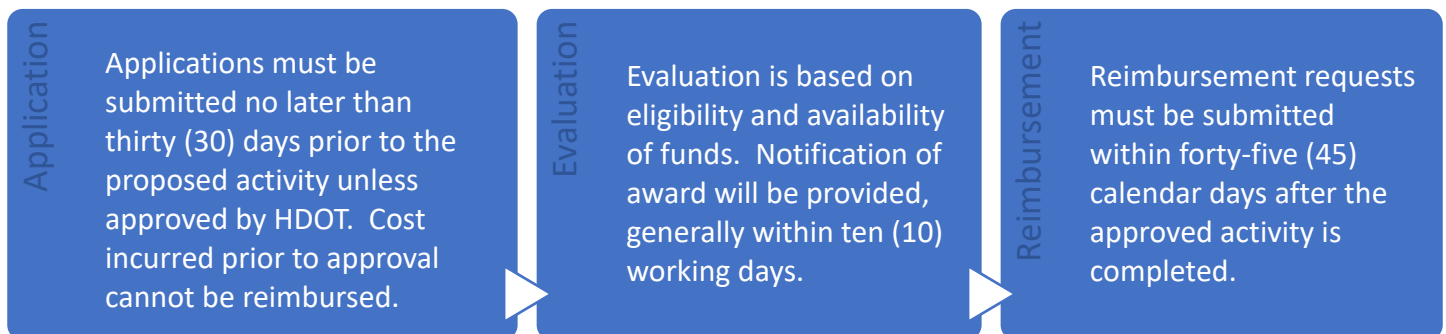
Applicant Eligibility

Public transit operators and organizations that provide transportation service in rural/non-urbanized areas of Hawaii, including those eligible to receive Federal Transit Administration Sections 5310 and/or 5311 funding are able to apply for this scholarship.

Funding Availability and Limitations

RTAP funding is apportioned each year by FTA and managed by HDOT. Scholarship applications will be evaluated based on need. Effective January 1, 2023, to ensure opportunity is provided for participation of rural transit operators, both public and private, the maximum amount a public transit operator (County of Hawaii, County of Kauai and County of Maui) can receive between January 1 and September 30 of each year will be limited to 25% of the annual RTAP apportionment. HDOT will set aside 25% of the annual RTAP apportionment for operators/organizations that provide rural public transportation (other than the counties), joint transit conferences/symposiums, and for State personnel to attend training events. On October 1 of each year, the balance of a public transit operator's annual RTAP share (that has not been awarded) will be made available to all applicants on a first come, first serve basis. On December 31 of each year, the balance of the total RTAP apportionment for that year will roll over into the subsequent year's cycle. HDOT will use additional discretion as needed to ensure fairness and alignment with the key objectives of the program. The RTAP apportionment amount varies each year, therefore, applicants should consult with the RTAP Program Manager to determine the level of funding available.

Application Process:



Refer to the application and reimbursement request forms for lists of supporting documents required for the submission to be considered complete. Late or incomplete applications and reimbursement requests may be rejected, and if reimbursement is not requested within forty-five (45) calendar days following completion of an event, and adequate justification for the delay cannot be provided, HDOT reserves the right to rescind the scholarship award to provide opportunities for other applicants.

Approval of the application may be subject to additional conditions or restrictions. Please refer to the letter of approval.

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Eligible Expense Categories and Limitations

1) **Training, seminars, and workshops** (conducted in-house, in-state, online or out-of-state) with subject matter specifically related to the transportation industry or focused on issues of concern to rural or specialized transit operations. Eligible subjects include, but are not limited to the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Shooter Training • ADA Training • Asset Management • CPR • Customer Service • Defensive Driving • Drug and Alcohol Testing • Emergency and Accident Procedures • Fleet Maintenance • GTFS Training • Human Trafficking/ Maltreatment Awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting and Implementing Regulatory Requirements • NTD Reporting • Passenger Assistance Safety and Sensitivity (PASS) • Performance Measurement • Personnel Management • Problem Passengers/De-Escalation • Procurement • Safety and Security • Scheduling and Dispatching • Sensitivity Training • Sexual Harassment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft Skills (Communication, leadership, etc.) • START or Other Driver Safety • Substance Abuse/Reasonable Suspicion • Succession Planning and Preparation • Title VI • Train the Trainer • Transit Operations/Transit 101 • Transit System Design • Wheelchair Management
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2) **Travel** to events (courses, conferences, conventions, seminars, and workshops) related to the transportation industry. Eligible events include, but are not limited to, those organized by AASHTO, ACT, APTA, COMTO, CTAA, FTA, National RTAP, NTI, or TRB.

The HDOT RTAP Scholarship travel policy is based on [Hawaii Administrative Rules \(HAR\) Chapter 3-10](#). Travelers are expected to comply with the guidelines listed below and submit supporting documentation upon request.

Whenever it is impractical to meet the guidelines or deviations are necessary for the purpose of attending an event (e.g. weekend travel to attend a conference starting on a Monday, hotel rooms at the most economical rate are not available, etc.) an explanation should be provided on the application and/or the reimbursement request. Whenever deviation from the guidelines is due to a personal preference (e.g., seat upgrades, extra days for personal time off, etc.), documentation must be provided to show the difference between the base cost and the cost due to the personal preference being applied, and only the base cost will be eligible for reimbursement.

- Travel route(s) should be the most economical and direct route(s) available to the point(s) of business destination. To the extent practicable,
 - o Travel should be scheduled for weekdays.
 - o Arrival and departure for intra-state should be within 5 hours from the start and end of the event.
 - o Arrival and departure for out-of-state travel should be within 24 hours from the start and end of the event.
- Airfare should be coach/economy class and secured within a reasonable timeframe prior to travel so as not to cause an unnecessary increase in cost. Out-of-state travel requires two (2) airfare quotations from different sources or using an aggregator such as Google Flights. Fees for one (1) bag is allowable. Additional baggage fees are allowable if justification can be provided. Boarding passes (hard copies or screenshots) must be retained for proof of travel.
- Rental cars should be classified as “compact” or “economy”. Justification is required if the most economical car is not chosen. Fuel is an eligible expense for reimbursement; however, insurance is not reimbursable.

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- Hotel rooms should be reserved as “Single Queen” or the most economical rate for a single occupant. Two (2) quotations are required unless the traveler stays at a conference hotel. Justification is required if the most economical cost hotel or room rate is not used. The hotel invoice must be retained for proof of stay.
- Meal allowances shall be as follows:
 - o Same day intra-state travel: up to \$20.
 - o Out-of-state travel: up to \$60 per 24-hour day.

3) **Specialized equipment** related to an eligible training activity. Examples include training aids for wheelchair restraint system training. Standard office equipment and supplies are not eligible. Procurement shall be conducted in accordance with Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 103D and applicable County purchasing requirements.

Ineligible Expenses

The following expense types and examples are not eligible for reimbursement through the HDOT RTAP Scholarship:

- Change, cancellation, and no-show fees
- Incidentals such as: in-room movies, room service charge, phone charges, alcoholic beverages, etc.
- Any expense reimbursed by another source of funding
- Expenses not pre-approved by HDOT
- Expenses incurred prior to the award of a scholarship

Consult with the RTAP manager for clarification on expenses that may be questionable.

Other Terms and Conditions

- When scholarship applications are awarded, the cost is pre-approved based on the estimate provided by the applicant and thus, it is the applicant’s responsibility to provide a reasonable estimate by obtaining quotations, accurately calculating per diem, etc. Only eligible expenses will be reimbursed. If the actual cost is higher, eligible expenses may be reimbursed in full, up to the maximum amounts listed below.
 - o For awards less than \$10,000, the maximum will be 10% more than the pre-approved amount
 - o For awards greater than \$10,000, the maximum will be \$1,000 more than the pre-approved amount
- Training, conference, and meeting attendee(s) must conduct themselves in a professional manner throughout the event and may be asked to share their experiences with other transit operators.
- Non-compliance with the policies and guidelines set forth in this document may result in the applicant not being reimbursed, and depending on the severity, applicants may be deemed ineligible for future scholarships.

Submission

HDOT RTAP Scholarship Applications and Reimbursement Requests should be submitted electronically by emailing the forms and supporting documentation, along with a cover letter to dotstp@hawaii.gov. The subject line must include either “RTAP Scholarship Application” or “RTAP Scholarship Reimbursement” to ensure proper routing. Electronic signatures on documents are acceptable. Hard copies are not required to be sent if submission is made electronically.

The application and reimbursement forms may also be printed and mailed to the address listed below.

Attn: RTAP Program Manager
Hawai'i Department of Transportation
Statewide Transportation Planning Office
200 Rodgers Boulevard, Honolulu, Hawaii 96819