

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

Subject:	Payment for State Licenses, Certifications Fees, and Professional Credentials and Examinations
Purpose:	Establishes Bureau of Reclamation requirements for payment of state licenses, certification fees, and professional credentials for employees. The benefits of this Directive and Standard (D&S) include allowing significant flexibility to meet local organizational needs and increasing opportunities for employee development, retention, and succession planning. It also allows Reclamation to provide assistance for staff to obtain credentials that demonstrate and provide evidence of professional competence.
Authority:	Title 43, United States Code, section 1471e, (43 USC 1471e) (enacted by Pub. L. 102-381, October 5, 1992); Title 5, United States Code, section 5757 (5 USC 5757) (enacted by section 1112 (a) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002, Pub. L. 107-107, December 28, 2001); Department of the Interior Departmental Manual (DM) 370 DM 410, 255 DM 2.1 E.
Approving Official:	Deputy Commissioner, Policy, Administration, and Budget
Contact:	Human Resources Division, Human Resources Policy Office (84-12100)

1. Introduction.

- A. Reclamation has responsibility for water and power resources and projects that affect the property, health, safety, and welfare of the people of the United States. To ensure that this responsibility is carried out in a safe and competent manner, some Reclamation employees are required to obtain state licenses, certifications, or other credentials that comply with state and Federal laws, regulations, or requirements. Other employees providing services solely for the Federal Government, are not required to obtain these credentials. However, Reclamation often chooses to provide objective evidence that work is conducted, administered, and performed by staff of proved competence at established professional standards by encouraging employees to obtain appropriate credentials for the work they are doing.
- B. This D&S provides the requirements for Reclamation to pay for training education courses, in accordance with Reclamation Manual (RM) D&S, *Bureau of Reclamation Learning and Employee Development Program* (HRM 01-01), that prepare employees to obtain or maintain credentialing (e.g., preparing or continuing education courses for the Society for Human Resources Management – Certified Professional (SHRM-CP) and reimburse employees for costs associated with obtaining or renewing the credential (e.g., fees to register for and take the SHRM-CP exam).

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2. **Applicability.**

- A. This D&S applies to all Reclamation employees that are required to maintain state license or certifications to comply with state and/or Federal laws, regulations or requirements (e.g., professional engineering registration, Commercial Driver License (CDL), wastewater treatment plant certification) or when the maintenance of the license primarily benefits the government.
- B. This D&S applies to all Reclamation personnel engaged in an occupation where obtaining and maintaining professional credentials is required in the position description, will enhance job performance, or will contribute to the development of an employee in support of Reclamation's mission, goals, objectives, or initiatives with the exception of "any employee occupying or seeking to qualify for appointment to any position that is excepted from the competitive service because of the confidential policy—determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating character of the position" (5 USC 5757).

3. **Process.**

- A. **Implementing Instructions.** Reclamation Leadership Team (RLT) members must establish implementing instructions that govern equitable treatment, including eligible expenses and payment processes within their respective organization.
 - (1) The implementing instructions must be consistent with this D&S and the following merit system principles (5 USC 2301):
 - (a) Recruitment should be from qualified individuals from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a work force from all segments of society, and selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge and skills, after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity.
 - (b) All employees and applicants for employment should receive fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of personnel management without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights.
 - (c) The Federal work force should be used efficiently and effectively.
 - (d) Employees should be provided effective education and training in cases in which such education and training would result in better organizational and individual performance.

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- (2) If the responsible RLT member determines that a credential is primarily for the benefit of Reclamation, expenses to obtain and maintain that credential are allowed. However, expenditures and reimbursements governed by this D&S must not be used to help an applicant obtain a credential for the sole purpose of meeting a selective placement factor for a vacancy announcement.
- B. Determining Position Credentials.** Supervisors must, in consultation with the servicing HR office, determine whether a position description must include a requirement for a specific credential. In addition, supervisors will work with employees to identify the need and appropriateness for licensing and credentialing for the employee, identifying the need on the employee's individual development plan (IDP). All determinations of position credentials must abide by merit system principles (see 5 USC 2301).
- C. Multiple Credentials.** At the discretion of the RLT member, an employee will be reimbursed for more than one license or certification.
- D. Payment.**
- (1) **Authority.**
 - (a) Reclamation has authority pursuant to 43 USC 1471e to pay or reimburse expenses to employees for the cost of state licenses and certification fees that are necessary to comply with state or Federal laws, regulations, or requirements (e.g., professional engineering license, wastewater treatment plant certification, CDL, etc.).
 - (b) Authority to pay or reimburse expenses to obtain or maintain professional credentials that relate to the mission, goals, and objectives of the organization for professional employees is provided in 5 USC 5757 (255 DM 2.1.E and 370 DM 410, paragraph 1.16), which adhere to established implementing RLT member instructions. These credentials must primarily benefit Reclamation. The goal to obtain or maintain the credential must be identified in the employee's IDP as a way to enhance the employee's professional credibility and/or job performance.
 - (2) **Expenses.**
 - (a) **Eligible Expenses.** Eligible expenses, subject to RLT member delegated authority and approval (see RM Delegations of Authority Paragraph 4.I.(1)(b)(ii)), include:
 - (i) application and processing fees;

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- (ii) study materials and tuition costs for review courses (in accordance with HRM 01-01);
 - (iii) registration fees for exams and tests for the credentials;
 - (iv) employee labor costs, travel, and per diem costs (e.g. if the examination is scheduled during the employee's normal workday and/or the exam location is outside the employee's local commuting area);
 - (v) fees to obtain copies of licenses, certifications, etc., evidencing the credentials;
 - (vi) admission fees to practice a profession or occupation before a government agency or a court' any other fees required by the government agency that grants the credentials involved;
 - (vii) tuition costs and course fees for continuing education classes or other training required by the credentialing organization to maintain an employee's credentials (in accordance with HRM 01-01); and
 - (viii) costs and fees associated with periodic renewal of credentials.
- (b) **Non-Eligible Expenses.** Payment for membership in occupational or professional associations and organizations are only allowed if such membership is an incidental by-product of obtaining the professional credential.
- (3) **Method.**
- (a) Payment for licensing and renewal activities (e.g., application and processing fees, fees to obtain copies of licenses, certificates, etc.) will be made by the employee and reimbursed by Reclamation. Reimbursement to employee is handled by submitting Form SF-1164 (Claims for Expenditures on Official Business) accompanied by appropriate receipts to the employee's supervisor, who forwards it to the appropriate office for payment.
 - (b) Payment for training and development activities (e.g., study materials, tuition for review courses, tuition for continuing education course, etc.) associated with obtaining or maintaining professional credentials will be made in accordance with HRM 01-01.

E. Documentation of Completion and Failure to Complete.

- (1) Employees complete all credentialing requirements, then provide proof of successful completion to their supervisor.

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- (2) Supervisors monitor and track successful and unsuccessful completions. For those employees who prove a successful completion and are in a designated position, supervisors provide that proof of completion to the servicing HR office for entry into the employee's electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF). For those employees in a designated position who fail to complete credentialing requirements, supervisors will contact their employee relations HR specialist to determine next steps.

4. **Definitions.**

- A. **Credentials.** Includes state licenses, state certifications, and professional credentials.
- B. **Designated Position.** A position that includes a requirement for credentialing in the position description.
- C. **Licensing.** The process by which an agency of government (Federal, state, or local) grants permission to or authorizes an individual to engage in a given occupation or activity upon finding that the applicant has attained the minimal degree of competency required to engage in that occupation or activity.
- D. **Professional Credentials.** Accreditation, license, certification, or any other form of attestation of qualification competence, or authority that an individual obtains from a Federal, state, or local government agency or professional association or organization to lawfully engage in the practice of a regulated profession, or demonstrate professional standards of competency.
- E. **Reclamation Leadership Team or RLT.** Reclamation's Executive Schedule, Senior Executive Service, and Senior Level positions comprise the RLT.
- F. **Selective Placement Factor.** Knowledge, skills, abilities, or special qualifications that are in addition to the minimum requirements in a qualification standard but are determined to be essential to perform the duties and responsibilities of a particular position. Applicants who do not meet a selective factor are ineligible for further consideration.

5. **Review Period.** The originating office will review this release every 4 years.

RECLAMATION MANUAL TRANSMITTAL SHEET

Effective Date: _____

Release No. _____

Ensure all employees needing this information are provided a copy of this release.

Reclamation Manual Release Number and Subject

Summary of Changes

NOTE: This Reclamation Manual release applies to all Reclamation employees. When an exclusive bargaining unit exists, changes to this release may be subject to the provisions of collective bargaining agreements.

Filing instructions

Remove Sheets

Insert Sheets

All Reclamation Manual releases are available at <http://www.usbr.gov/recman/>

Filed by: _____

Date: _____