

# MARTap Scholarship Guidelines

## **Background/Purpose**

The Massachusetts Association of Regional Transit Authorities (MARTA), under contract to the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT), administers the Rural Transit Assistance Program (MARTap) for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The purpose of the MARTap program is to address the training and technical assistance needs of rural and small urban transportation providers.

One of the FTA-approved program delivery mechanisms is the provision of scholarships for tuition and expenses for individuals to attend training courses or workshops. Therefore, one element of the MARTap program is a scholarship program designed to provide funds to eligible agencies to help defray the cost of sending personnel to approved conferences, workshops and training courses. With this aid, transportation providers in Massachusetts are able to take advantage of valuable training opportunities, including community-based continuing education programs, which would otherwise be prohibitively costly.

In addition, transportation providers are able to attend national transit conferences and thereby further develop professional networks on a state, regional, and national basis and facilitate peer-to-peer information exchange within Massachusetts. Finally, the knowledge attained from these conferences can be shared with others from throughout the Commonwealth to further benefit all transit providers.

The scholarship program is administered by MARTA and the RTAP Advisory Committee. MARTA and the RTAP Advisory Committee may establish additional requirements or request additional information from scholarship applicants to enhance the efficient and equitable administration of the program.

## **MASSACHUSETTS RTAP SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

### **I. RTAP Scholarship Goals**

A. To further the development of the professional skills and abilities of rural and small urban transportation providers in Massachusetts.

B. To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the MARTap training efforts by taking advantage of training resources developed by other organizations within Massachusetts and in other states.

The mechanism for achieving these goals is the provision of financial assistance to eligible recipient organizations to fund participation by agency personnel in eligible training programs, workshops and conferences.

## II. Eligible Recipient Agencies

- A. Section 5311 (formerly Section 18) recipients (including Regional Transit Authorities and their public or private operating contractors.)
- B. Section 5310 (formerly Section 16b) recipients in non-urbanized areas.
- C. MAP recipients and other human service agencies that provide transportation services in rural and small urban areas.
- D. Section 5310 (formerly Section 16b) recipients in urbanized areas or public transit providers in urbanized areas (RTAs and their contractors).

An urbanized area consists of a core area and the surrounding densely populated area with a population of 50,000 or more, with boundaries fixed by the Census Bureau or extended by state and local officials.

## III. Scholarship Limits

See attached allocation policy.

## IV. Application Procedure

- A. Applicants must submit a completed application form, including justification for the scholarship, estimated costs and agency contribution (see attached sample) to MARTA as early as possible in advance of the date of the requested conference/training program but no later than 30 days prior to the program date. Following receipt of an application, MARTA will notify the applicant of amount of the scholarship award or a reason for denial.
- B. Applications may be submitted for any training course, workshop or conference relevant to the applicant's professional responsibilities. MARTA staff, in consultation with the RTAP Advisory Committee, will determine whether the program is eligible, based on its content and relationship to the goals of the MARTap program and the balance of scholarship funds available. A printed list of known national, regional and state public transportation conferences will be published at the start of each fiscal year and made available to all eligible agencies.
- C. Scholarships are not limited to those conferences that appear on the annual list. Eligible agencies are encouraged to apply for scholarship assistance for skills enhancement programs, such as computer training, available in their communities.
- D. The eligible agency must be able to advance the attendee's travel expenses, and seek reimbursement from MARTA after the conference/training session has concluded.
- E. Following the conference/training, the agency must submit a completed request for reimbursement (sample attached), fully documented with copies of receipts for expenditures.
- F. If reduced air fare and/or hotel rates are available in conjunction with the conference or training, the agency must make every possible effort to obtain those special rates.

G. In order to maximize the use of limited scholarship funds, each agency must contribute a minimum amount of the costs of the educational program and the concomitant travel expenses based on the funding allocations as previously referenced.

H. At MARTA's discretion, the attendee may be asked to submit a summary of experience gained at the conference or training course and its value in the performance of his/her duties. These reports may be distributed throughout the state, and participants may be asked to provide presentations on the knowledge gained from each conference.

## V. Selection Process

All applications will be evaluated on the basis of:

A. The justification (both in terms of financial need and the anticipated value of the program to the attendee's performance of his/her job or to the operation of the agency's services) included on the application;

B. The contribution of the agency;

C. The amount of funds requested;

D. Previous agency scholarship awards within the tier; and,

E. The balance of funds remaining within the tier in the scholarship program.

Applications will be reviewed and approved by MARTA staff. If there is a specific question or concern on any application, the RTAP Advisory Committee may be asked to perform a further review.

## VI. Reimbursement Procedures

Expenses that are eligible for reimbursement under the scholarship program include transportation (airfare, bus or train fare, taxi, and automobiles at \$0.445 per mile. Rental car transportation is *not* subject to reimbursement unless prior approval is received through MArtp), lodging, conference or course registration fees, and meals which are not included in the program. The maximum allowable for meals will be up to \$40 per day. Scholarship recipients may spend more than this allowance on meals, but MARTA will only reimburse agencies at the \$40 per day rate. All copies of receipts for meals must accompany the request for reimbursement.

As indicated earlier, if special airfare and/or hotel rates are available in conjunction with the conference or training session, the agency must make every possible effort to obtain those special rates. If the agency attempted and was unable to obtain special rates, an explanation must be included on the reimbursement form.

Requests for reimbursements must be submitted to MARTA within 30 days of the conclusion of the conference or training session. All requests for reimbursement must be signed by both the attendee and the agency Director/Administrator, and must include copies of receipts for expenditure items. Expenses submitted for reimbursement may be disallowed by MARTA if, in MARTA's sole discretion, they are deemed inconsistent with the purpose of the program and/or state or federal regulations. Payment will be made to the agency, not the attendee, except in those circumstances where the attendee

chooses to advance his/her own expenses.

The MArtap Scholarship Program will reimburse the agency for the percentage of actual eligible expenses up to the maximum amount stated in the award letter. If actual expenses are less than the estimated costs submitted in the application, the percentage of costs covered by the scholarship will remain the same, but the dollar amount will decrease. If actual eligible expenses are greater than estimated costs, the agency will receive the stated maximum scholarship amount, and its own contribution will increase.

*updated 1-17-07*