

EDUCATION POLICY STATEMENT
FOR THE
COUNTY OF TULARE
457(b) DEFERRED COMPENSATION PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The County of Tulare has established and authorized (as “Plan Sponsor” or “designee”) a Defined Contribution Committee (“Committee”) to provide oversight of the County’s Deferred Compensation 457(b) Plan (Plan). In general, the Committee seeks to follow Internal Revenue Code section 457(b) and other applicable laws and regulations. Although the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) does not apply to the Plan, the Committee intends to operate the Plan generally in conformance with ERISA 404(c). The Committee recognizes the vital role of education for both plan fiduciaries (Board of Supervisors, Committee, plan administrator and support staff) and plan participants. The details of educational programs are divided into two parts: Part 1 covers the duties and responsibilities for **fiduciary education**. Part 2 covers the duties and responsibilities for **participant education**.

The Education Policy Statement (“Policy”) is based on established ERISA and state regulatory requirements and industry best practices regarding the Committee’s, Provider’s (the Record-keeper, currently Great West) and Consultant’s (currently SST Benefits Consulting) responsibilities for education. The Policy is intended to aid the Committee in meeting fiduciary and other responsibilities pertaining to the Plan.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to identify methods that may be used by the Committee in the selection and monitoring of educational programs for the Plan fiduciaries in Part 1 and participants in Part 2.

The Policy intends to establish procedures for the identification, communication and evaluation of educational programs to allow participants to make informed decisions regarding their retirement planning, investments and distributions. Further, the Policy intends to establish educational programs to allow fiduciaries to fulfill their fiduciary due diligence responsibilities in managing the Plan.

PART 1: EDUCATION POLICY – DECISION-MAKERS

1.1 Intent

For plan fiduciaries and staff, it is the assertion of this Policy that the Committee, Provider and Consultant must:

- Expressly focus attention on new fiduciaries and staff to assure they know and understand their fiduciary roles.
- Develop an annual plan of scheduled educational programs for fiduciaries and staff.
- Acknowledge that it is important that fiduciaries make informed judgments on all matters which come before them.
- Understand the primacy of all actions for the benefit of plan participants and their beneficiaries.
- Adopt the types of objectives and procedures for plan participants as stated in Part 2 of this Policy.
- Make available educational programs to fiduciaries and staff that cover plan compliance, legislative and regulatory activities, fund selection and monitoring, and “best practices” in operational standards.
- Encourage fiduciaries to participate to the fullest extent possible in educational activities provided by recognized associations and institutes for defined contribution plans.
- Establish funding for internal and external educational programs as appropriate for the Plan.
- Establish performance standards for the delivery of education to fiduciaries and staff.

1.2 Objectives of Fiduciary Education

The goal of fiduciary education is to assure that all trustees (Committee members) and support staff understand their fiduciary responsibilities and exercise due diligence in the actions they take on behalf of plan participants and their beneficiaries. The objectives of fiduciary education are to:

- Assure that new fiduciaries and staff receive education covering their responsibilities.
- Assure that fiduciaries and staff understand basic fund evaluation methodology, fund objectives and characteristics, tracking, compliance, and appropriate benchmarks.
- Increase fiduciary awareness of national best practices in plan monitoring, especially in educational programs available to plan participants.

- Understand and help shape plan review content and frequency.
- Supply ongoing communication of information and education.
- Screen and participate in the education programs offered to participants.

1.3 Types of Educational Programs.

Below are a series of categories and types of information provided in education to fiduciaries. These categories and informational types are meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive.

- For new fiduciaries, a review of basic plan features, documents (e.g. Plan Document, Investment Policy Statement, Education Policy Statement, By-Laws, Reserve Policy) forms, past fiduciary actions (prior year of minutes).
- Review and understanding of charts / graphs used in Provider, Consultant and / or third-party fund performance reviews.
- Review and understanding of performance standards and guarantees used in Provider performance reviews by Consultant.
- Familiarity with plan participant education, guidance and advice services.
- Understanding special plan responsibilities, even if the task is outsourced, covering unforeseen emergencies, catch-up provisions (both 50+ and traditional), loan options, domestic relation orders and Roth options.
- Awareness of rollover options and strategies for encouraging plan participants to remain in the plan after retirement.
- Awareness of defined benefit and defined contribution assets to influence both asset allocation strategies as well as retirement objectives.
- Use of outside educational programs which may include the National Association of Defined Contribution Administrators (NAGDCA), International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans (IFEBC), or International Foundation of Retirement Education (InFRE).

1.4 Process for Reviewing Education Objectives

The Committee will review annually the Education Policy Statement and identify upcoming educational opportunities based on the Committee's priorities. The Committee will determine the frequency of fiduciary education.

PART 2: EDUCATION POLICY – PLAN PARTICIPANTS

2.1 Intent

For plan participants, it is the assertion of this Policy that the Committee and Provider must:

- Acknowledge that the purpose of education is to enable participants to make self-interested, informed decisions regarding their retirement planning and security.
- Offer educational programs and services to plan participants that incorporate basic plan information as well as investment guidance and advice services.
- Tailor educational content to participants in different agencies / departments or at various stages in their life / career (from early employment through retirement).
- Utilize diverse mediums and formats (face-to-face, print, electronic and internet) to maximize participant education.
- Develop an annual plan of scheduled educational programs to meet the diverse needs of plan participants.
- Communicate to plan participants, at least annually, the content and schedule of upcoming educational programs.
- Evaluate educational programs primarily based on participant satisfaction but also considering other behavioral impacts including: plan participation, contribution, diversification, rebalancing and distribution management.
- Establish performance standards for the delivery of participant education.

2.2 Objective of Educational Programs

Each year, educational programs will be offered to cover the breadth of participant needs from entry level personnel, mid and near-term employees as well as retired participants. The Committee deliberately chooses to organize its target groups for education into four categories: entry level, mid-career, pre-retirement and retirement.

The objective of all educational programs is to elevate participant understanding of their retirement financial objectives and to impact their behavior when they are planning for these objectives.

2.3 Types of Educational Information

Below are a series of categories and types of information provided in an educational program. These categories and informational types are meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive.

Entry-Level

- Basic investment strategies including pre-tax / post-tax contributions (regular and Roth), untaxed asset growth, basic retirement objectives, self risk-

assessment, identification of retirement objectives and time horizon, basic understanding of diversification, asset allocation and fund selection.

- Awareness of specific deferred compensation plan requirements including contribution limits, taxation, distribution requirements / restrictions (unforeseen emergencies, in-service, de minimus and post-service distributions) and portability.
- Summary of Plan Sponsor and provider-specific policies and documents. These may include the plan document, application and other transaction forms, investment and education policies, issue-specific documents (unforeseen emergencies, loans, catch-up provisions, domestic relations orders).
- Summary of employer procedures including timing and method of accessing account information, and obtaining and completing transactions.

Mid-Career

- Coordinating other assets with defined contribution assets, including defined benefit programs, other household income and assets, and Social Security benefits.
- Understanding basic risk-reward theories within the core fund line-up and exposure to tools addressing risk tolerance, retirement objectives and time horizon.
- Increasing knowledge of investment terminology and concepts.
- Considering available investment guidance and advice services and managed account options.
- Familiarity with asset allocation options including risk and life cycle funds.
- Understanding of Roth 457 options compared to regular 457 contributions.

Pre-Retirees

- Maximizing contributions to include 50+ and traditional catch-up provisions.
- Preliminary understanding of distribution options and impact on meeting long-term retirement needs.
- Termination options including use of sick leave, vacation and other accrued benefits as contributions to their retirement plan assets.
- Rollover options and the pros and cons of maintaining funds in the County Plan compared to non-Plan options.

Retirees

- Asset allocation strategies in retirement including investment strategies, diversification and risk of fund options, tax consequences, minimum required distributions and liquidity strategies.

- Evaluating alternate retirement options including Individual Retirement Accounts and annuitized distributions.
- Rollover options and the pros and cons of maintaining funds in the employer Plan compared to non-Plan options.

2.4 Plan Objectives

The goal of the Committee is to provide all employees with a comprehensive, prudently managed voluntary retirement savings program. The Plan objectives are the following:

- The Plan is established for the exclusive benefit of the participants and their beneficiaries.
- The Plan is a vehicle through which eligible employees and participants may accumulate assets to provide for a portion of their retirement needs.
- The Committee seeks to provide a broad range of educational programs in the Plan recognizing participants' diverse demographics and their differing retirement objectives.
- The Committee will assure that investment guidance and advice programs are readily available in the Plan with no or reasonable cost to plan participants. Ideally, the range of programs will allow participants to manage their own investments without assistance, to manage their own investments with assistance or to have their investments managed entirely by a designated Provider of services to the plan.
- The Committee will, at least annually, review its educational policies, educational curriculum, performance standards and procedures to assure that strong and effective strategies for plan participants are represented.

2.5 Duties and Responsibilities

The Committee must identify individuals responsible for carrying out Plan duties. In general, duties and responsibilities for Plan participant education are as follows:

- Establish educational services offered by providers to plan participants.
- Require Provider adherence to this Education Policy as adopted and amended from time to time.
- Develop education-specific Provider performance standards based on goals and financial guarantees that will be part of ongoing Provider evaluation.
- Review this Policy at least annually and recommend amendments to the Policy at any time to reflect changes in the procedures or to incorporate requirements based on new regulations and / or best practices.
- Approve annual educational topics and the schedule of on-site educational programs targeted to both current employees and retiree participants and assure that the programs are easily accessible by all plan participants.

- Identify multi-channel (i.e., electronic, one-to-one, printed, etc.) educational programs which are made available to participants.
- Provide input and approve ongoing communication / marketing of educational programs.
- Promote plan participant use of guidance and investment advice services.
- Encourage coordination of defined benefit and defined contribution information as well as other participant assets in order to achieve the most comprehensive development of asset allocation strategies.
- Establish and monitor, at least annually, the impact of educational programs on participant behavior including, but not limited to, the number of participants in the plan, total and average plan contributions, number of fund selections per participant, frequency of re-balancing by participants, and participant usage of different components of the educational program.
- Assure that the Policy is easily accessible by plan participants as appropriate.

2.6 Disclosure of Fees and Charges for Educational Services

Educational services requiring payment of participant fees and charges must be fully disclosed to the Committee before services are made available to plan participants.

In addition, participant fees and charges for educational services must be disclosed to all participants at enrollment and at any other time as appropriate.

2.7 Communication to Participants

Information about education programs and services will be made available to Plan participants. The Committee will communicate at least annually announcing the schedule of educational on-site programs, the schedule of Provider representative availability for individual participant appointments, website educational material and special support programs (covering guidance and advice services, managed account options and any other financial planning services). Communication will be delivered in such format(s) to reach the widest participant audience, as determined by the Plan Sponsor.



Chairperson, Defined Contribution Committee



Date