

# Out-of-Scope Flexible Benefit Account Program Frequently Asked Questions

Last revised: November 2022  
Last reviewed: November 2022  
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Total Rewards, Public Service Commission

*This document outlines questions and answers frequently asked to determine employee eligibility, claim reimbursement eligibility, questions regarding claim submission, and timelines.*

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## Program Administration and Enrollment

### **Why do I have to sign an enrollment form that requires me to direct unused funds to PEPP?**

The employer requires authorization and direction from the employee to direct funds to PEPP and therefore, an enrollment form is required.

### **What deductions are taken from the flexible benefit claim amount?**

Flexible benefit claim amounts are taxable and subject to CPP and EI deductions.

### **Why does the amount left over as of February 28 get directed to PEPP?**

The Flexible Benefit Account Program is designed to encourage physical fitness and financial planning. For this reason, it precludes receipt of the amount as cash. In order to ease administrative requirements, the program does not allow for accrual of any portion of the benefit from one year to the next. Any unused portion in excess of \$10.00 is directed to PEPP as a voluntary contribution in March.

To ensure all claims and voluntary pension contributions are processed by March 31, no claim submissions will be accepted after February 28.

## Employee Eligibility

### **How is the six (6) month waiting period calculated?**

Out-of-Scope employees will become eligible for the flexible benefit in the fiscal year in which they complete six (6) months of service. For example, if the employee commenced employment on May 10<sup>th</sup>, they will have completed the full six (6) month waiting period on November 9<sup>th</sup> and would become eligible for the flexible benefit amount effective November 10<sup>th</sup>.

### **Are contract employees eligible for the flexible benefit?**

Employment contracts require review to determine flexible benefit program eligibility. Contracts will often indicate that the same benefits and salary adjustments apply as those that are provided to other Out-of-Scope Executive Government employees or will provide specific reference to the sections of the Public Service Regulations, 1999 that are applicable.

### **How is the flexible benefit amount calculated for an employee on a Definite Leave of Absence?**

Employees who commence a Definite Leave of Absence (DLOA) prior to March 31 are eligible for the full benefit amount if the leave period is less than six (6) months. If the period of leave is greater than six (6) months in the fiscal year, the benefit amount will be reduced by 1/12<sup>th</sup> for each full calendar month not worked in the fiscal year. Exception to the above: The period of time that an employee is on a definite leave for reasons of disability is eligible for the flexible benefit.

Saskatchewan 

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## **How is the flexible benefit amount calculated for an employee on an Indefinite Leave of Absence?**

Employees who commence an Indefinite Leave of Absence (IDLOA) prior to March 31 will have their benefit amount reduced by 1/12<sup>th</sup> for each full calendar month not worked in the fiscal year.

## **How is the flexible benefit amount calculated for an employee who has terminated their out-of-scope position mid-fiscal year?**

Employees who terminate their out-of-scope position prior to March 31 will have their benefit amount reduced by 1/12<sup>th</sup> for each full calendar month not worked in the fiscal year.

## **Does in-scope time count towards the six (6) months waiting period if the employee moves out-of-scope?**

An in-scope employee who has completed a minimum of six (6) months of service with Executive Government will have the waiting period waived for the flexible benefit upon commencement into a **permanent** out-of-scope position. If movement is to a **non-permanent term** out-of-scope position, a waiting period must be served prior to becoming eligible for the flexible benefit. Eligibility is subject to the completion of an enrollment form.

## **Is an in-scope employee who is temporarily reclassified (TR) to an out-of-scope position eligible for the flexible benefit program?**

No, in-scope employees in a Temp Reclass are not eligible.

## **Is an in-scope employee on a leave of absence to work in a non-permanent term out-of-scope position eligible for the flexible benefit program?**

Yes, an in-scope employee who takes a leave of absence from an in-scope position to work in a term out-of-scope position will become eligible in the fiscal year that they complete the six (6) month waiting period in the out-of-scope term position. In-scope service does not count towards the waiting period if the movement is to a non-permanent position.

## **Does an in-scope employee who is permanently reclassified to an out-of-scope position or accepts a permanent out-of-scope position through competition, required to serve a waiting period?**

No. If the change in assignment is to a **permanent out-of-scope position**, the waiting period is waived. The employee will become eligible for the flexible benefit in the fiscal year in which the reclassification decision is processed (no retroactivity).

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## **Is a full-time employee returning to work on a gradual return to work schedule eligible for the full flexible benefit amount in that fiscal year?**

A full-time employee returning on a gradual return to work program is eligible for the full flexible benefit amount. Employees who are on a definite leave of absence of greater than six (6) months in the fiscal year will be eligible for a prorated portion of the flexible benefit (allocated benefit amount reduced by 1/12th for each full calendar month not worked) in that fiscal year. Exception to the above: The period of time that an employee is on a definite leave for reasons of disability is eligible for the flexible benefit.

## **If an employee is on a definite leave of absence and is approved for disability (DIP) benefits, are they eligible for the flexible benefit amount?**

Yes, the period of time an employee is on a definite leave of absence (DLOA) for disability reasons is eligible for the flexible benefit amount. For example:

Active	01-APR-21 to 30-JUN-21
DLOA (disability)	01-JUL-21 to 31-MAR-22
<i>*Employee eligible for full Flex Benefit for 2021/2022 fiscal year.</i>	
DLOA (disability)	01-APR-21 to 31-MAR-22
<i>**Employee eligible for full Flex Benefit for 2021/2022 fiscal year.</i>	
DLOA (disability)	01-APR-21 to 30-JUN-21
IDLOA (disability)	01-JUL-21 to 31-MAR-22
<i>***Employee is eligible for 3/12<sup>th</sup> of the Flex Benefit for 2021/2022 fiscal year.</i>	

## **Can an employee make a claim while on a leave of absence of greater than six (6) months?**

Yes, for the prorated amount they were eligible for at the time they took the leave.

## **Does an employee returning from a definite leave of absence have to serve the six (6) months waiting period?**

No. An employee only needs to serve one waiting period.

## **If an employee comes from an employer outside of Executive Government who had a flexible benefit account program, do they need to wait the six (6) month waiting period?**

Any employee coming from outside of government has to wait the six (6) month waiting period before becoming eligible for the flexible benefit account, regardless if the previous employer had a similar program.

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## **Does time worked as a Ministerial Assistant count towards the six (6) month waiting period upon commencement to an out-of-scope position with Executive Government?**

No, Ministerial Assistants are governed by The Ministerial Assistant Employment Regulations, 1993 and therefore, the time does not count towards the six (6) month waiting period.

## **If an employee passes away, how much Flex Benefit are they eligible for?**

The employee is eligible for the full Flex Benefit amount for that Fiscal Year.

## **Eligible and Ineligible Claims**

### **What kind of fitness activities does the flexible benefit cover?**

The flexible benefit is to be used to promote fitness, mobility, and/or strength – and there is a wide range of options for employees to pursue, depending on their individual interests and circumstances. The goal is a healthy lifestyle change, and a longer-term commitment to fitness, therefore the flexible benefit amount applies to longer-term items such as gym memberships and the purchase of equipment or supplies that are fitness specific and required to perform the activity (i.e., running shoes are required for running/jogging).

### **Are the purchase of used goods/equipment eligible for reimbursement under the flexible benefit program?**

Used equipment will be reimbursed as long as there is an original receipt in the employee's name. No claims should be filed seeking reimbursement based on receipts issued by another public servant, their immediate family member or the employee's immediate family members.

### **Do parts/repairs to an existing piece of equipment qualify for reimbursement?**

Parts and repairs to existing pieces of equipment qualify for reimbursement as long as the existing equipment is eligible under the plan. (i.e., treadmills, bicycles, tennis racquets, etc.)

### **Are golf punch pass vouchers reimbursed?**

Yes. The goal is a healthy lifestyle change, a longer-term commitment to fitness, therefore, a punch pass would qualify as a longer-term fitness commitment. A single round of golf does not meet the eligibility of the program, however, it would be acceptable to save receipts from single rounds of golf and submit at one time for reimbursement. A minimum of six single rounds of golf would meet the program criteria for reimbursement.

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## **Is a recognized weight loss program, such as Weight Watchers/Jenny Craig/Herbal Magic eligible for reimbursement?**

Membership fees to weight loss programs such as Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig will be covered as long as the program is at least six consecutive weeks in duration and food of any kind, including supplements, are not included in the membership fees. As Herbal Magic is largely a nutrition/supplement program it will not be covered.

## **Are PEPP contributions only allowed to be made at the end of the fiscal year?**

By using the flexible benefit claim form, contributions to PEPP can be made at any time during the fiscal year.

## **If two out-of-scope employees in an immediate family work for government, can they both claim one expense? For example, can each person use their flexible benefit amount for the same purchase? (i.e., the purchase of a treadmill).**

Yes, up to the value of the purchase.

## **I have my student loans withdrawn each month from my bank account and don't receive a receipt. My online account is with the National Student Loans program, and I could get a printout each month, would this qualify as an original receipt?**

If the bank allows additional allocation of dollars, then this printout is fine. If the bank doesn't allow additional allocation of dollars, then the printout from the previous month as well as the printout from the month the payment was made needs to be included. If the payment is made on the interest, then this is tax deductible.

## **Is the Tax-Free Savings Account eligible?**

Yes.

## **Can the flexible benefit amount be used towards the payment of tuition?**

No, the flexible benefit policy clearly states that the flexible benefit will be administered as a reimbursement to offset the costs associated with activities that promote physical fitness, fitness counseling, financial advice, and payment of student loans. Tuition doesn't fall under any of these categories.