

Purpose

To outline the process administer and maintain a Staff Emergency Fund (SEF), for the purpose of providing limited financial assistance to ISU staff members facing immediate and temporary financial hardships.

Background

There are currently no existing programs to provide recourse for ISU staff beset by sudden hardship. According to the publicly available Staff Compensation Plan, many full-time, benefits-eligible staff remain at compensation levels which leave them vulnerable to such an unexpected financial hardship. Human Resources is not currently able to offer help to ISU employees in such a situation, but will direct inquiries toward outside resources such as shelters, food banks, etc. Funds exist which have been donated to ISU that have been earmarked for a Staff Emergency Fund should one be created.

Rationale

To the extent that funding permits, the SEF will provide ISU staff with a level of protection against emergency hardship. The benefits to the staff person in the midst of such an emergency are obvious, but the existence of such a fund may also serve to reduce financial stress and increase morale. Staff Emergency Funds, dependent on donations, have been created and maintained successfully at many other universities, including, but not limited to: Indiana University Southeast, University of Illinois, and University of Texas. Creation and maintenance of the SEF will provide a high-visibility and high-impact project to point to for staff to see how Staff Council can benefit them. By increasing the quality of life of ISU employees, and especially those employees the most vulnerable to financial hardship, the SEF will support Goal 5 of the ISU Strategic Plan.

Administration

1. Staff Emergency Fund would be seeded with a portion of an existing gift in support of Staff Council as voted on by Staff Council. Additional contributions will help increase the level of support available.
2. This fund will require the creation of an SEF Committee within Staff Council
 - a. This committee will be comprised of 3 members with 2 alternates in case one or more members are not available for an extended period of time
 - b. Membership shall be comprised of the Staff Council Treasurer, the Grievance Liaison, and a member of the Staff/Employee Relations Committee of Staff Council. In the event that the Treasurer or Grievance Liaison are not available, the Staff Council Chairperson will be their alternate. If the Staff/Employee Relations Committee member is not available, another member from the Staff/Employee Relations Committee selected by their committee Chairperson will be their alternate, the Committee Chairperson cannot self-select. If there are not three members available to review the request, the committee will wait until there are at least three committee members available.

- c. In the unlikely event that a request is made during the transition of positions, the current sitting position will see the process through even if they no longer fill the position listed above.
 - d. Committee members will be required to understand the confidentiality of the documents and cases they will be requested to handle.
 - e. If a committee member feels they have become aware of an applicant (example, someone directly inquires about the Staff Emergency Fund to a committee member), it is their ethical responsibility to recuse themselves from that application review.
3. University Advancement shall facilitate the creation and administration of the fund, including the Gift Agreement which will include the selection/awarding criteria (listed below).
 4. Awarded funds will be paid through ISU payroll and subject to taxes.
 5. The SEF will award up to \$1,000 to qualifying applicants.
 6. Awardees will not be required to repay awards, but will be encouraged to volunteer for council events and guided about how they can contribute toward the fund once they are able.
 7. Should there be no funding available then an appointed representative from the Staff Council will inform the ISU community via the Staff Council website, Staff Council Newsletter, and other media outlets.

Eligibility

1. Active, benefits-eligible full-time staff.
2. With a temporary financial hardship due to unforeseeable emergency.
3. Must not have received an SEF award within two years of the current application.
4. One employee per household for every rolling two-year time frame.
5. Must have examined alternative resources which were unavailable or insufficient to meet their current need.
6. Examples of emergencies meeting the above definition include: natural disaster, domestic violence, death of immediate family member, fire, sudden and serious illness, critical injury.
7. Awards would not be available for events such as: legal fees or fines, debt consolidation, litigation, non-emergency large purchases, credit card payments or chronic debt, elective surgery, routine child care costs, vacation, non-emergency moving expenses, tax payments, etc.
8. Awards are intended for those who were able to manage their financial situations prior to the emergency in question. It will not be feasible for the SEF to meaningfully assist in situations of longer term financial hardship.
9. Valid requests may exceed available funds, in which case the SEF committee will need to allocate awards based on the immediacy or the extent of the emergency situation. The fund may especially be insufficient in cases of widespread disaster or community crisis.
10. Aid is administered on a first come, first served basis.

Application process

1. Applicants will submit the required information via a link on the Staff Council website.

2. The submittal portal will contain all applicant information but will be encrypted so that no one will have direct access to the applicant's name or other identifying information. This will allow the committee access to all key information needed to make an impartial decision.

In the event that a solution via OIT is not possible, then the following process will be used until OIT has resources available to do so. The application will be submitted via the existing Staff Council email which is reviewed by the Staff Council Chairperson. The Staff Council Chairperson will make redacted copies of all documentation to ensure the applicant remains anonymous during the review and post those documents on the SEF review committee section of the Staff Council Teams page (locked to only committee members).

3. Once notified of an application, the Grievance Liaison will convene the SEF Committee to review the anonymous application to determine eligibility.
4. At least two of the three committee members must approve in order for the application to be accepted.
5. If application is not accepted, then the Grievance Liaison will notify the applicant and share other opportunities to assist in their situation.
6. If application is accepted, the Treasurer will begin the process of disbursement of funds in collaboration with University Advancement and the Grievance Liaison will notify the applicant
7. The approved application will be stored for a two-year period to ensure the applicant follows eligibility guidelines.