City of Austin
Interoffice Memorandum

TO: Jason Kelly, IT Supervisor

FROM: Tom Thibodeau, Systems Administrator

DATE: July 17, 2020

SUBJECT: Certification Course Reimbursement Request

Introduction
During our last team meeting, I recognized a common theme, and that theme was improvement. Specifically, I heard several of my peers mention that there is room for improvement with our FAQ and Wiki, instructions for end-users, and knowledge base articles.
The meeting was very timely, as I recently completed a 16-week Technical Writing Certification program. The program taught me how to be a better writer, so that I can assist with the writing and communication issues that have been plaguing us. Put simply, I believe that the skills I learned can be of great value to our team. Thus, I would like to formally request reimbursement for the course. Allow me to first offer some insight into what I have learned, and how I plan to use my knowledge for the good of our team and clients.

Don't Speak in Code
Every technical writer must learn to understand the need for effective communication. However, there is no need to reinvent the wheel; a set of writing conventions already exists to help every writer get their point across. Moreover, wiki articles, instruction sets, knowledge base entries, etc must always adhere to the same conventions. Ultimately, adhering to writing conventions can and will improve the quality and strength of our message, as well as take our communication skills to the next level. Just as Microsoft made DOS obsolete by creating an innovative user interface, so too must we make poor writing obsolete by creating content that focuses on effective communication between us and our audience.

Garbage In, Garbage Out
Whether the audience consists of our highly technical peers or less technical end-users, every single document must stick to its point like bark to a tree. If the document is too wordy, our reader is going to be confused and likely frustrated. As a result, the quality of our content will suffer. Alternatively, a concise document conveys only what its audience needs, and nothing more. Do we want our reader to blow a fuse because s/he is reading cluttered, overly-wordy instructions? No, of course we don't. So we must edit, edit, edit to ensure every document is firing on all cylinders. Our dedication to efficient writing will help establish the IT department's reputation as a credible source of reliable information.

Well-Oiled Machine
Ultimately, we want our published documentation to be functional, presentable, and effective. Luckily, at present, we are only slightly off course. By cleaning up our existing documentation, freeing ourselves of clutter, getting straight to the point succinctly, and using a variety of other writing techniques I've learned, we will become a bastion of quality and of truth. Our users will actively seek us out to answer their technical inquiries, and we will be able to ask, "well, have

you had a chance to read [X document]?" Moreover, if our documentation answers their questions before they call us, our ticket load will diminish significantly, allowing us to focus on key projects we have previously had to neglect.

Conclusion and Notes

Given what I have learned, we stand to save a great deal more than money by utilizing what I've outlined in this memo. Time, energy, and frustration are all worth their weight in gold. The monetary cost for the Technical Writing Certification course was $1,795. When I signed up for the course, I believed $1,795 was an appropriate cost for the benefits I would receive. To me, it was an upfront investment with long-term returns. I can share those benefits with our team, and am humbly requesting IT Services staff to see this as an investment as well. I believe that a reimbursement of $1,795 is a wise venture for all of us, with powerful and lasting returns. Additionally, the skills I have refined and techniques I have learned will be passed down to fellow team members.

Thank you for your consideration, and please don't hesitate to reach out if I can answer any additional questions.