



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

2026-2027 PA WORKFORCE PELL APPLICATION GUIDANCE

Volume 1



Pennsylvania
Department of Education

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Josh Shapiro, Governor

Department of Education
Dr. Carrie Rowe, Secretary

Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education
Dr. Lynette Kuhn, Deputy Secretary

Bureau of Postsecondary and Adult Education
James Ayrton, Director

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Pennsylvania Department of Education
Equal Employment Opportunity Representative
Bureau of Human Resources
Voice Telephone: (717) 783-5446

For Inquiries Concerning Nondiscrimination in All Other Pennsylvania Department of Education Programs and Activities:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
School Services Unit Director
Forum Building, 607 South Drive, Harrisburg, PA 17120
Voice Telephone: (717) 783-3750

If you have any questions about this publication or for additional copies, contact:

Pennsylvania Department of Education
Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education
Forum Building, 607 South Drive, 3rd Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17120
Harrisburg, PA 17120 (717) 425-5728
www.education.pa.gov

All Media Requests/Inquiries: Contact the Office of Press & Communications at (717) 783-9802

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Introduction

Workforce Pell is an expansion of the federal financial aid Pell Grant to short-term job training programs. Workforce Pell was instituted by the United States Congress through H.R.1 on July 4, 2025, with an effective start date of July 1, 2026.

Workforce Pell was developed with the purpose of:

- Expanding postsecondary education funding to short-term, career-focused training programs
- Identifying and promoting high-skill, high-wage, in-demand occupations based on in-state decision-making
- Ensuring outcomes-based evaluation of programming including graduation rates, placement rates, and value-added earnings

To verify program eligibility, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) will collect program and student-level data from eligible postsecondary institutions seeking Workforce Pell program approval. Reporting guidelines are listed here and will reference templates provided. Eligible institutions include those that are approved to operate in the Commonwealth, accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE), and eligible to receive Title IV funding. Participation in this program is voluntary, and eligible institutions are not required to participate.

Eligible institutions must submit program-level data demonstrating that proposed programs align with the approved occupation list and meet all federal and state Workforce Pell requirements in order to obtain program approval. Institutions must also submit student-level data to confirm evidence that a program can meet federal defined value-added earnings measures.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

Student education records are official, confidential documents protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 20 USC 1232g). FERPA defines education records as all records – both paper and computerized – that schools or education agencies maintain about students and protects both paper and computerized records. FERPA and other privacy laws (such as Title I and Special Education) ensure that information about citizens collected by schools and government agencies is released only for specific and legally defined purposes.

Under FERPA Sec. 99.31 and 99.35, education agencies may release personally identifiable information to the PDE for the purposes of auditing and evaluating education programs and complying with federal and state regulations.

Initial Occupation List, 2026-2027

The Governor, in consultation with the SWDB, was charged with approving occupations that meet the states' high-skill, high-wage, and/or in-demand workforce needs. The SWDB endorsed the list of occupations listed below as Pennsylvania's Workforce Pell eligible occupations.

Table 1: Workforce Pell Eligible Occupations (with associated CIP Code and CIP Title)

SOC Code	SOC Title	CIP Code	CIP Title
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	11.0101	Computer & Information Sciences, General
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	11.0301	Data Processing & Data Processing Technology/Technician
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	11.1006	Computer Support Specialist
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	15.1202	Computer/Computer Systems Technology/Technician
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Non-Postsecondary	13.1210	Early Childhood Education & Teaching
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Non-Postsecondary	13.1501	Teacher Assistant/Aide
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Non-Postsecondary	19.0706	Child Development
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians	51.0810	Emergency Care Attendant (EMT Ambulance)
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians	51.0904	Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic)
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	51.0805	Pharmacy Technician/Assistant
29-2081	Opticians, Dispensing	51.1801	Opticianry/Ophthalmic Dispensing Optician
29-2099	Health Technologists & Technicians, Other	51.0899	Allied Health & Medical Assisting Services, Other
31-1120	Home Health & Personal Care Aides	19.0702	Adult Development & Aging
31-1120	Home Health & Personal Care Aides	51.0899	Allied Health & Medical Assisting Services, Other
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	51.3902	Nursing Assistant/Aide & Patient Care Assistant/Aide
31-9096	Veterinary Assistants	01.8301	Veterinary/Animal Health Technology/Technician & Veterinary Assistant
31-9097	Phlebotomists	51.1009	Phlebotomy Technician/Phlebotomist
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration Mechanics & Installers	47.0201	Heating, A/C, Ventilation & Refrigeration Maintenance Technology
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers & Repairers	46.0301	Electrical & Power Transmission Installation/Installer, General
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers & Repairers	46.0303	Lineworker
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers	48.0501	Machine Tool Technology/Machinist

SOC Code	SOC Title	CIP Code	CIP Title
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers	48.0503	Machine Shop Technology/Assistant
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers	48.0508	Welding Technology/Welder
53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	49.0205	Truck & Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator & Instructor
47-2031	Carpenters	46.0201	Carpentry/Carpenter
47-2111	Electricians	46.0302	Electrician
47-2111	Electricians	46.0399	Electrical and Power Transmission Installers, Other
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters & Steamfitters	46.0503	Plumbing Technology/Plumber
49-9052	Telecommunications Line Installers & Repairers	47.0103	Communications Systems Installation and Repair Technology/Technician
51-9161	CNC Tool Operators	48.0501	Machine Tool Technology/Machinist
51-9161	CNC Tool Operators	48.0503	Machine Shop Technology/Machinist
51-9161	CNC Tool Operators	48.0510	Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) Machinist Technology/CNC Machinist

Program Eligibility

PDE will review and analyze institutional data to determine whether programs satisfy all Workforce Pell eligibility requirements as outlined in the federal regulations. Programs determined to meet applicable federal criteria will be approved by PDE for inclusion on the PA Workforce Pell approved program list for the 2026-27 academic year. PDE retains authority to request supplemental documentation or clarification necessary to verify compliance prior to issuing a final eligibility determination.

To qualify for state approval, programs must satisfy all federal Workforce Pell eligibility requirements, including, but not limited to:

- Program has been in operation for at least the 12-month period immediately preceding the request for the program approval.
- Alignment with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand workforce criteria.
- Program length and instructional hour requirements between 150-599 clock hours and 8-less than 15 weeks instruction (or 4 but less than 16 semester or trimester hours; or at least 6 but less than 24 quarter hours) .
- Award of a recognized and portable postsecondary credential.
- Evidence of employer or industry engagement supporting workforce alignment.
- Tuition and cost transparency.
- Student outcome data demonstrating a 70% graduation and 70% placement rate.
- Value-Added Earning by program completion cohort.
- Cannot be a correspondence course (this does not prevent distance education), study abroad, or a direct assessment program.
- Provides evidence of internal stackability or external transferability consistent with the PA Workforce Pell 2026-27 Stackable and Portable Credential Policy.
- Program is taught 100% by the applying institution or another Workforce Pell eligible institution.

The initial PA Workforce Pell approved program list for 2026-2027 will be developed based on the data submitted and analyzed by PDE in collaboration with the Pennsylvania State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) and approved by the Governor. Upon completion, the list will be provided to the SWDB for final endorsement prior to submission to the Governor for approval. Once approved by the Governor, the list will be submitted to the US Department of Education for review and approval in accordance with federal Workforce Pell requirements.

PDE will issue written notification to institutions regarding approval or denial of program eligibility. Approval by PDE constitutes eligibility for inclusion on the PA Workforce Pell approved program list for 2026-2027 and does not, by itself, authorize participation in Workforce Pell funding absent subsequent federal approval. If program approval is received, institutions will be required to submit teach-out agreements in the event the program becomes ineligible for any reason.

PDE will issue additional policies to address processes and procedures: (i) for periodic review of listed occupations and programs to ensure continued eligibility of such occupations and programs; (ii) to determine eligibility of new occupations and programs; and (iii) for program approval and appeals.

Eligible postsecondary institutions are invited to submit an application for PDE to review institutional programs to be included on the 2026-27 list of PA Workforce Pell programs to be approved by Governor Shapiro. The 2026-2027 PA Workforce Pell Application Guidance manual describes the process that must be followed to submit short-term workforce training courses and programs to PDE for review.

Application Elements and Process

Eligible postsecondary institutions in Pennsylvania who are accredited and eligible to award Title IV Federal financial aid may submit an application to have their programs reviewed for approval for Workforce Pell. Institutions should follow the process below to submit their program applications:

1. Create a secure account for data transfer using the [account creation form](#)¹ (you will receive emails from ra-enterpriseftpserv@pa.gov when your account is created. This may take up to two weeks). **Requests for secure account creation close at 5 pm, March 31, 2026.**
2. Review the data specifications in this manual and start gathering required data and information.
3. Download the PA Workforce Pell Application: Data Submission template 2026-27 and Attestations Form from [Workforce Pell | Department of Education | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)². The secure data file transfer portal opens at 9 am on Monday, March 9, 2026.
4. Complete the PA Workforce Pell Application by **12 noon on April 17, 2026**, including uploading the Data Submission template 2026-27 and all required files necessary for application submission, which are:
 - a. Completed PA Workforce Pell Application Data Submission Template 2026-27
 - b. A signed Attestations Form **for each program being submitted**
 - c. Employer-Aligned Competencies evidence **for each program being submitted**
 - d. Stackable and Portable Credentials evidence **for each program being submitted**
5. Log into the [secure FTP site](#)³ to upload your files. You will see four folders corresponding to the four types of documents required to be uploaded. Please consult the table below for naming conventions for each type of document:

<u>Folder Name</u>	<u>Naming Convention</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Supporting Documentation</u>
Data Collection template	AUN-Institution Name-Date.xlsx	Main application file listing outcomes data for each program the institution wishes to have reviewed and student data corresponding to each program.	PA Workforce Pell Application: Data Submission template 26-27
Employer Aligned Competencies evidence	AUN-Institution Name-Program Code-Employer evidence.pdf	Evidence could include regional workforce advisory board minutes, employer-endorsed program notification, etc.	Employer-Aligned Competencies evidence
Stackable and Portable Credential evidence	AUN-Institution Name-Program Code-Stackable evidence.pdf	Evidence could include signed articulation agreements, internal credit policies	Stackable and Portable Credential evidence
Attestations Form	AUN-Institution Name-Program Code-Attestation.pdf	Attestation document that certifies the program being submitted meets certain federal program requirements	Attestations Form

¹ <https://forms.office.com/g/1itDqrg2mg>

² <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/programs-and-services/instruction/postsecondary-and-adult-education/workforce-pell>

³ <https://copaftp.state.pa.us/>

Data Submission Template

Templates are the files institutions use to securely submit data to PDE for review of their training programs for Workforce Pell. Template specifications define the fields required for each file submitted to PDE. The template maps directly to separate Excel worksheets in the associated Workforce Pell Data Collection template. Templates ensure institutions are submitting complete information that will allow PDE to accurately assess the eligibility of each program. It is important for institutions to follow the data specification outlined below to make sure they are submitting the data and information requested.

Within the Workforce Pell Data Submission Template 2026-2027, there are three worksheets:

1. Instructions—This sheet includes additional instructions and a quick view of the Workforce Pell submission process and file layout for the data collection worksheets.
2. Program Information Data worksheet—This sheet is where the institution will list the short-term training courses/programs that they are submitting for review.
3. Student Information Data worksheet —This sheet will include student level data of students who attended the courses/programs submitted in the Program Information Data worksheet. Students submitted in this sheet should be those who enrolled during the 2023-2024 academic year. If a program was new and only operated during the 2024-2025 academic year, submit data for students enrolled during the 2024-2025 academic year.

Template Field Information

Each template specification within this manual will have a table that indicates the following information:

Field #	PDE designated field number corresponding with a column in the templates. Each field can be uniquely identified within the template.
Field Name	Field name of each column within the template.
Definitions	PDE definition of each field to be collected.
Business Rules	Any relevant PDE business rules that must be followed in creating the field value are defined here.
Valid / Sample Value(s)	If a field requires one value in a specific code set (e.g., Gender – “M” for male and “F” for female) that code set will be defined here. If the field is a free-form field (e.g., Last Name Long), example data will be supplied.

Program Information Data Worksheet

Template Instructions

The Program Information Data worksheet within the Data Collection Template contains information on eligible Workforce Pell Programs. The state application process will use the provided data to confirm program eligibility according to federal regulations as well as evidence of historical ability to meet federal outcome measurements specific to your program.

- Use the provided template to complete the correct values for each entry using the directions below.
- Please complete the worksheet with one row per training program.
- For reporting purposes, enrollment intensity (full-time v. part-time) does not constitute a separate program. Only one entry should be entered on the data template per program, regardless of attendance status or length of session.
- The Program Information Data worksheet should include all programs your institution is applying for that meet the program eligibility, have been in operation during the previous 12 months prior to requesting program approval, , and will be offered during Academic Year 2026-2027.

Program Information Data Worksheet Specifications

Field#	Field Name	Field Definition	Business Rules	Valid / Sample Value(s)
1	AUN	The unique 9-digit Administrative Unit Number (AUN) assigned by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. All Institution and Campus codes can be found at: EdNA website		Example: 123456789
2	INSTITUTION NAME	The institution's official name		Example: North West State College
3	ACCREDITOR	The institution's institutional accreditor approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education as listed in the Federal Register		Example: Middle States Commission on Higher Education
4	CREDIT/ NONCREDIT	Specifies whether the Workforce Pell program is offered on a credit or noncredit basis	Follow valid values	Valid Values: Credit Noncredit
5	CREDENTIAL/ AWARD	The name of the credential or award that a student receives upon completion of the Workforce Pell program		Example: Certificate of Completion
6	LICENSE/ CERTIFICATION	The name of any license or certification the student is eligible to earn as a result of completing the Workforce Pell program		Example: Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
7	CIP CODE	Six-digit Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code aligned to the Workforce Pell program. The CIP Code is the accepted government standard for program coding in all education information surveys. NCES CIP Code Definitions	Format is XX.XXXX	Example: 15.0125

Field#	Field Name	Field Definition	Business Rules	Valid / Sample Value(s)
8	INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAM CODE	An institution specific code used for linking students reported in the student data template to the Workforce Pell program	The code listed in this field must match the code used in the 'Institutional Program Code' field in the Student Information Data Form	Examples: NUR, ElectEng
9	PROGRAM TITLE	The official name of the Workforce Pell program as approved by the institution's governing board and published on the institution's publicly accessible website		Example: Electrical Engineering
10	SOC CODE	Six-digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code of the occupation students are prepared for entry into upon completion of the Workforce Pell program. The SOC Code is the accepted government standard for coding occupations. Definitions can be located at the Bureau of Labor Statistics	Format is XX-XXXX	Example: 51-8011
11	OCCUPATION	The occupational title that corresponds to the six-digit SOC Code identified for the Workforce Pell Program	This will populate based on the SOC Code entry.	Example: Nuclear Power Reactor Operators
12	CLOCK HOUR/ CREDIT HOUR PROGRAM	Identifies whether the program operates in a clock hour or credit hour format	Follow valid values	Valid Values: Clock Hour Semester/Trimester Credit Hour Quarter Credit Hour
13	NUMBER OF HOURS	The number of hours of training the program provides to students	Hours must be within the following limits: clock hour programs between 150 and less than 600 hours semester/trimester credit hour programs between 4 and less than 16 semester hours quarter credit hour programs between 6 and less than 24 quarter hours	Example: 275

Field#	Field Name	Field Definition	Business Rules	Valid / Sample Value(s)
14	NUMBER OF WEEKS	The number of weeks the training program operates if operating on a full-time basis	Programs are required to operate for at least 8 weeks, but no more than 15 weeks.	Example: 12
15	CORRESPONDENCE COURSE (Y/N)	Indicates whether the training program is a correspondence course, as defined in 600.2 of title 34 , Code of Federal Regulations. This is differentiated from a distance education course.	Correspondence courses are not eligible for Workforce Pell and therefore should not be included in this application.	Constant: NO
16	TRANSFER PROGRAM NAME	Indicates the name of a related certificate or degree program that a student, upon completion of the Workforce Pell program and enrollment in the related program, will receive academic credit for the learning outcomes of the Workforce Pell program. The related program may be offered by another institution or the institution offering the Workforce Pell program.		Example: Associate of Applied Science in Mechatronics
17	TRANSFER PROGRAM INSTITUTION	The name of the institution that operates the certificate or degree program that awards academic credit for the completion of the Workforce Pell program. This can be the same institution that offers the Workforce Pell program.		Example: Compass Direction State University
18	PUBLISHED TUITION AND FEES	The full amount of published tuition and fees paid by a full-time student enrolled in the Workforce Pell program without any additional financial support		Example: \$4,750

Student Information Data Worksheet

Template Instructions

The Student Information Data worksheet within the Data Collection Template contains indicators and measures related to each student who enrolled in a potential Workforce Pell program during the academic year specified. Institutions should submit one record in this template for each student who enrolled in a potential Workforce Pell program during the specified academic year.

- Use the provided template to complete the correct values for each entry using the directions below.
- Please complete the worksheet with one row per student, per training program enrolled.
- If a student enrolled in more than one workforce program during the reported year, then they should have an entry for each program.

The Student Information Data worksheet should include **the cohort of students who first enrolled** in your potential Workforce Pell program(s) during the **2023-2024 academic year**. *If your program was new in 2024-2025 and did not operate in 2023-2024, you may submit enrollment and graduation data for 2024-2025.*

Student Information Data Worksheet Specifications

Field#	Field Name	Field Definition	Business Rules	Valid / Sample Value(s)
1	INSTITUTION AUN	The unique 9-digit Administrative Unit Number (AUN) assigned by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. All Institution and Campus codes can be found at: EdNA website		Example: 123456789
2	INSTITUTION NAME	The institution's official name		Example: North West State College
3	SSN	The student's 9-digit Social Security Number		Example: 123456789
4	STUDENT FIRST NAME	The student's legal first name		Example: John
5	STUDENT MIDDLE NAME	The student's legal middle name		Example: James
6	STUDENT LAST NAME	The student's legal last name		Example: Smith
7	INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAM CODE	An institution specific code used for linking students reported in the student data template to the Workforce Pell program	The code listed in this field must match the code used in the 'Institutional Program Code' field in the Program Information Data Form	Examples: NUR, ElectEng
8	FULL-TIME / PART-TIME	Is the student considered by the institution to be a full-time student or part-time student? If there is no distinction, then list as full-time.	Follow valid values	Valid values: YES NO

Field#	Field Name	Field Definition	Business Rules	Valid / Sample Value(s)
9	PROGRAM START DATE	The date the program began.	All dates must be entered in ISO format (YYYY-MM-DD).	Example: 2026-01-15
10	STUDENT START DATE	The date the student started the program	All dates must be entered in ISO format (YYYY-MM-DD).	Example: 2026-01-15
11	ANTICIPATED PROGRAM COMPLETION DATE	The date the program officially ended for the cohort.	All dates must be entered in ISO format (YYYY-MM-DD).	Example: 2026-01-15
12	ACTUAL STUDENT COMPLETION DATE	The date the student actually completed the program	All dates must be entered in ISO format (YYYY-MM-DD).	Example: 2026-01-15
13	STUDENT EXCLUSION CATEGORY	Identify if the student did not complete the program due to any of the following reasons		Valid Values: 1 - Died 2 - Experienced the onset of a medical condition that prevents employment 3 - Ordered to service in the armed forces, for a period of more than 30 days 4 - Became incarcerated
14	JOB PLACEMENT	Since completing the Workforce Pell program, has the student been placed in a job (if known)	Follow Valid values	Valid values: YES NO UNKNOWN
15	JOB PLACEMENT START DATE	The date the student began the job they were placed at following completion of the Workforce Pell program (if known)	All dates must be entered in ISO format (YYYY-MM-DD).	Example: 2026-01-15

Required Evidence and Attestations

Eligible postsecondary institutions who elect to apply for Workforce Pell must provide program data as well as evidence toward credit articulation, employer alignment and attestations related to continuous operations and good-standing. Acceptable evidence for employer-aligned competencies and stackable and portable credentials is outlined below and explained in greater detail in corresponding policies posted on [Workforce Pell | Department of Education | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)⁴.

Documentation is to be provided for *each program seeking approval* and must be uploaded to the institution's secure account as a PDF or other static file type (.PNG/.JPG) in the corresponding folder. PDE reserves the right to request additional documentation and/or evidence as needed to verify eligibility.

Submission of Evidence Requirements

Stackable and Portable Credential Evidence: Participating institutions must demonstrate that the program (i) leads to a recognized postsecondary credential that is stackable and portable across more than one employer or prepares students for, and awards, the sole recognized postsecondary credential required for employment in the occupation, and (ii) ensures that academic credit is awarded and accepted toward a certificate or degree program where required. Evidence must demonstrate one or more of the following:

- **Internal Stackability:** demonstrates that the credential awards transcribed academic credit and the credit applies toward a higher-level certificate or degree program at the originating institution.
- **External Transferability:** demonstrates that a written articulation agreement is fully executed, the agreement specifies the credits accepted and their applicability, and the receiving institution is an institution of higher education participating in Title IV federal student aid programs.
- **Sole Recognized Postsecondary Credential:** a credential shall be considered the sole recognized postsecondary credential only where completion of the credential is required by statute, regulation, licensing authority, or governing occupational standard and no alternate postsecondary credential is required to qualify an individual for entry into employment in the occupation.

Documentation without specific credit applicability language shall not satisfy this requirement. Articulation agreements must be fully executed and in effect for a minimum of one year prior to the submission for program approval. PDE will evaluate submitted documentation to determine whether the credential satisfies the standard.

Employer-Aligned Competencies Evidence: Participating institutions must demonstrate that a program meets the hiring requirements of employers and delivers the expected employer aligned competencies. Evidence that the program is recognized by employers within the high-skill, high-wage or in-demand occupations and that the program delivers the competencies required for employment in the occupation may include:

- Employer hiring standards;
- Industry-recognized credential standards;

⁴ <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/programs-and-services/instruction/postsecondary-and-adult-education/workforce-pell>

- Competency or curriculum alignment materials;
- Published occupational qualification requirements;
- Formal endorsement letters from employers within the relevant industry; or
- Advisory board meeting minutes reflecting Pennsylvania employer participation and curriculum review.

Failure to maintain alignment may result in the program becoming ineligible for Workforce Pell.

Attestations Form

To complete and certify validity of all data and evidence submitted for the institution’s PA Workforce Pell application, attestation forms must be completed and signed for each program seeking approval. This form can be downloaded from the [PA Workforce Pell](#)⁵ web page and includes the following attestations:

1. Program information collects the institution name, program name, institutional program code, CIP and SOC code.
2. Program Attestation that the program:
 - a) Has been in operation for at least the 12-month period immediately preceding the request for the program approval;
 - b) Provides education aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations;
 - c) Meets the hiring requirements of employers in such sectors or occupations;
 - d) Leads to a recognized postsecondary credential that is stackable and portable across more than one employer, or prepares students for and awards the sole recognized postsecondary credential required for employment in the occupation; and
 - e) Prepares students to pursue one or more certificate or degree programs at one or more eligible institutions by ensuring that, upon completion and enrollment in a related program, students will receive academic credit that is accepted toward meeting certificate or degree requirements.
3. Attestation that the program aligns with employer-defined competencies and that supporting documentation has been submitted accordingly.
4. Institutional Attestation that it has: not been subject to suspension, emergency action or termination of programs submitted for approval; accreditation by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education in good standing; and made a commitment to teach-out or provide transfer for students if the program loses eligibility.
5. Complete application attestation confirms that all required PA Workforce Pell 2026-2027 application elements have been completed and submitted *for each program seeking approval* to the secure account including: the Data Submission template, the Stackable and Portable Credential evidence; the Employer-Aligned Competencies evidence, and the Attestations form itself.

Institutions must notify PDE at ra-edpaworkforcepell@pa.gov within 30 days of any substantive modification, expiration, or termination of executed agreements or evidence submitted for PA Workforce Pell eligibility.

⁵ <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/programs-and-services/instruction/postsecondary-and-adult-education/workforce-pell>

Failure to maintain evidence demonstrating compliance with these requirements may result in the program becoming ineligible for Workforce Pell.

Frequently Asked Questions – PA Workforce Pell 2026-2027

Q1: Are you using a state list to determine high wage/in demand occupations? If an occupation is not on the list now, we have been encouraged to survey our local employers to determine what the demand might be over the next year. While our programs tied to occupations may not be on the list now, can we expect that they could be added with various local and state sources in the future?

PDE has worked in collaboration with the State Workforce Development Board and the Governor's Office to determine the occupations that will be eligible for Workforce Pell approval. In the initial year, the occupations are statewide and will not vary by region. The approved list of occupations will be evaluated on an annual basis and is expected to include some regional variation in future years.

Q2: What would PDE consider as proof of median earnings of program completers? We can certainly get median earnings for the state, but I highly doubt we, or any school, can make that happen for program completers. Earnings are handled through the IRS or social security information.

PDE is working with the Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) to match completer data with wage records. Institutions will be required to submit data on students who have completed each program for review. PDE will match that data to L&I's wage record system to determine whether the program meets the placement and wage threshold to be approved for participation. This information will then be verified at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Education.

Q3: Our programs are clock hour, and I am not sure if PDE would classify them non-credit courses/programs or credit-bearing course/programs. They lead to licensure so I believe they would be considered credit-bearing.

Enabling federal Workforce Pell legislation and supporting state policy provides that both credit and noncredit training programs are eligible for Workforce Pell provided that they meet required metrics.

Q4: Can programs be removed or added to be considered if eligibility changes? Will the person/department reporting be updated?

Per federal law, PDE will be required to monitor program compliance in future years, as well as re-certify each institution's programs when they renew their Program Participation Agreement with Federal Student Aid. The details around this process are still being finalized in federal rulemaking and will be a topic of discussion at regional stakeholder discussions later this year.

Q5: I am concerned about the data requirements as it will be difficult to collect salary information, etc. from previous students in these programs.

The institutions will not be required to collect earnings information from students. PDE will work with L&I to determine earnings outcomes for program completers.

Q6: If there are changes to hours or weeks criteria, we would have more programs that would be eligible. For instance, Dental Assistant, Pharm Tech, Welding, and more would be eligible if hours are reduced to 100.

The program duration hours to be eligible for Workforce Pell are not determined by PDE. Federal law established the hours and week requirements for programs to participate in the program. If an institution seeks consideration of a program for inclusion in a future review cycle, any modifications to the program must be fully implemented and in effect for a minimum of one year prior to the date of submission for review.

Q7: Our organization is not accredited, but we are licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education – Private Licensed Schools Division. We respectfully request consideration to participate in this grant opportunity.

Per federal law, eligibility for Workforce Pell requires that a program provider be accredited by an agency or entity that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Because your institution is not currently eligible, you may wish to explore becoming accredited to qualify for the new Workforce Pell in future years, should the program meet eligibility requirements.

Q8: We are an accredited school and we accept Student Financial Aid through FAFSA. We'd like to know if we qualify and what do we have to do?

If you are already able to accept federal student aid, the institution is eligible to submit programs for review if they align with the initial occupation list, assuming that they meet the federally defined requirements of the program. Please complete a PA Workforce Pell: Electing Institution's Account Creation Form as the first step to secure data submission for eligibility approval.

Q9: What is a clear pathway from a short-term non-credit program to a certificate program or an academic degree?

Please review the Stackable and Portable Credential Policy posted here [Workforce Pell | Department of Education | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#) for guidance on this topic.

Q10: Will students need to apply individually for Workforce Pell?

The institution will be required to apply to PDE for each eligible program that they offer. The Governor will approve individual Workforce Pell programs and submit the list to the U.S. Secretary of Education. The U.S. Department of Education will develop a process to award Workforce Pell grants to individual students through Federal Student Aid. Students will need to complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

PA Workforce Pell Application Guidance Manual Change Summary

There have been no changes included in this version of the *2026-27 PA Workforce Pell Application Guidance manual*.

Version	Volume	Section	Change
NONE			