Pennsylvania
Department of Education

PA Workforce Pell 2027-28 Occupation Selection Methodology

This policy establishes the methodology used by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to identify the occupations eligible for consideration under the federal Workforce Pell Grant regulations.

This policy is issued pursuant to the final federal Workforce Pell regulations, which require Governors to establish a process and methodology for identifying high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations served by eligible short-term postsecondary programs. The methodology outlined herein is intended to ensure compliance with federal requirements while supporting Pennsylvania's workforce development priorities.

Federal law requires the Governor to establish a process through which postsecondary institutions may request approval of short-term training programs to determine eligibility for Workforce Pell funding. First in this process, the Governor must establish criteria and a methodology for identifying eligible occupations that meet the states' high-skill, high wage or in-demand workforce needs.

Development of the 2027-28 Occupational List

The Governor designated PDE as the lead state agency responsible for the administration, coordination, implementation, and oversight of Workforce Pell for the Commonwealth. As part of this designation, PDE is required to consult with the Pennsylvania State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) to ensure that occupation and program eligibility determinations are informed by current labor market data and align with state workforce priorities.

PDE coordinated with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) and SWDB to identify occupations for potential inclusion on the list of eligible Workforce Pell occupations. The process began with the full universe of occupations, which was then narrowed to those meeting the federal criteria for Workforce Pell eligibility. PDE applied the occupation selection criteria outlined in **Appendix A** to reflect the requirements of the final Workforce Pell regulations and emphasize educational level, projected labor market demand, entry-level wage expectations, and industry-based credential portability.

Additionally, PDE hosted five regional meetings across the 10 Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) regions to determine in-demand occupations needed in these specific areas. Regional stakeholders were convened to ensure selected occupations and programs align with employer demand, regional workforce priorities, and emerging occupations.

Participants collaborated to:

- Identify emerging high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations within the region to inform Pennsylvania's 2027-28 Occupation List.
- Discuss current and projected workforce shortages and the skills employers need most.
- Review existing education and training programs available in the region and identify opportunities to address gaps.
- Explore innovative institutional approaches to develop or redesign programs that meet Workforce Pell eligibility requirements while responding to regional workforce needs.
- Define the essential and non-negotiable competencies employers expect for successful employment in Workforce Pell-eligible occupations.
- Strengthen collaboration among employers, workforce partners, institutions of higher education, career and technical education providers, and apprenticeship sponsors to better align education with workforce demand.

Based on both the above occupation analysis and the feedback received from the regional meetings, PDE identified 65 occupations (Appendix B) that demonstrate alignment with Workforce Pell eligibility requirements and the potential to support qualifying training programs. Each occupation was then evaluated independently against the required criteria.

Inclusion on the occupation list does not guarantee program approval. Submitted programs must meet each Workforce Pell eligibility requirement to be approved by the Governor.

Role of Institutions and Program Data Collection

Once the endorsement of the 2027-28 occupation list by SWDB is received, PDE will submit the list to the Governor for approval.

Following the Governor's approval, PDE will begin to collect program and student-level data from eligible postsecondary institutions seeking Workforce Pell program approval. A reporting template and guidelines will be 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 to obtain program approval. Institutions must also submit student-level data to confirm evidence that a program can meet value-added earnings measures. Submitted data for the proposed programs may include, but is not limited to:

- Student identifiers (SSN, Name, etc.)

- Institution AUN
- Program Information (including CIP, clock hours, credit hours, cost, credential awarded, etc.)
- Cohort Start Date
- Cohort Scheduled Completion Date
- Student Actual Start Date
- Student Actual Completion Date
- Student Withdrawal Date (if applicable)
- Program Articulation Agreements
- Program Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Eligible Program Determination Process

PDE will review and analyze the 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 Commonwealth's Workforce Pell eligible program list. PDE retains authority to request supplemental documentation or clarification necessary to verify compliance prior to issuing a final state eligibility determination.

To qualify for approval, programs must satisfy all federal Workforce Pell eligibility requirements for the 12-months preceding the approval request, including, but not limited to:

- 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 2027-28 Stackable and Portable Credential Policy.
- Program is taught 100% by the applying institution or another Workforce Pell eligible institution.

The list of proposed programs will be developed based on the data submitted and analyzed by PDE in collaboration with the SWDB and 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 State Workforce Pell Certification form will be provided to

the institution for submission to the USDE for review and approval in accordance with federal Workforce Pell requirements.

PDE will issue written notification to institutions regarding state approval or denial of program eligibility. Approval by PDE constitutes eligibility for inclusion on the Commonwealth program list, but does not, by itself, authorize participation in Workforce Pell funding absent subsequent federal approval.

PDE will issue additional policies to address processes and procedures for periodic review of listed occupations and programs to ensure continued eligibility of such occupations and programs, process and procedures, as well as to determine eligibility of new occupations and programs, processes and procedures for program approval and appeals.

Appendix A: Workforce Pell Occupation Selection Criteria

Criteria	Threshold	Workforce Pell Eligibility Requirements in Statute	Data Source
Typical Entry Level Education	On-the-Job Training or Postsecondary Credential	Program length is anticipated to align within allowable Workforce Pell instructional timeframe of 8- less than 15 weeks.	Universe of Occupations List from State Workforce Development Board
Required Contact Hours	150-599 hours	Workforce Pell requires programs to be at least 150 hours, but less than 600 clock hours of instruction.	Licensure Requirements or Existing Program Curriculum
Entry Level Wages	$23,940[1] (At least 150% of federal poverty level for an individual)	Program must satisfy a value-added earnings cap: published tuition and fees may not exceed value-added earnings (regional price parity minus 150% of the poverty line).	Labor and Industry Statewide Occupational Wage Information (May 2025)—Median Entry-Level Wage[2]
Projected Annual Demand	250 or more	Program must be aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry or occupation, as defined by a state's governor. The cutoff includes 95% of all projected 10-year openings.	Occupational List from State Workforce Development Board
Industry Credential	Yes	Workforce program results in a recognized postsecondary credential that is stackable and portable across more than one employer or prepares students for employment in an occupation for which there is only one recognized postsecondary credential.	A state or federal license, registration, certification, permit, legally required training or authorization for the work as described.[3] National or widely accepted entry-level credential by industry

[1] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, "Poverty Guidelines," accessed October 30, 2026.
[2] PA Department of Labor & Industry, Statewide Occupational Wage Information, accessed 10/20/2026.
[3] OpenAI. ChatGPT. Response to "Pennsylvania or national credential requirements by SOC title." October 30, 2026.

Appendix B: SOC Code/CIP Code Crosswalk

Description: SOC/CIP Code Crosswalk identified higher education programs by CIP that align to the eligible occupational programs.[4]

Note: Programs that can demonstrate alignment to the eligible occupational training may also qualify even if the program CIP code is not listed below. Contact PDE to discuss exceptions.

SOC Code	Occupational Title	CIP Code	CIP Title
11-1021	General & Operations Managers	52.0201	Business Administration and Management, General
13-1031	Claims Adjusters, Examiners & Investigators	52.1701	Insurance
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	11.1006	Computer Support Specialist
17-3024	Electro-Mechanical Technicians	15.0499	Electromechanical Technologies/Technicians, Other
17-3026	Industrial Engineering Technicians	15.0699	Industrial Production Technologies/Technicians, Other
19-4021	Biological Technicians	41.0101	Biology/Biotechnology Technology/Technician
21-1093	Social & Human Service Assistants	44.0000	Human Services, General
21-1094	Community Health Workers	51.0001	Health and Wellness, General
25-3011	Adult Basic & Secondary Education & Literacy Teachers	13.1401	Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language/ESL Language Instructor
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Non-Postsecondary	13.1210	Early Childhood Education & Teaching
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians	51.0904	Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic)
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	51.0805	Pharmacy Technician/Assistant
29-2053	Psychiatric Technicians	51.1502	Psychiatric/Mental Health Services Technician
29-2081	Opticians, Dispensing	51.1801	Opticianry/Ophthalmic Dispensing Optician

[4] Lightcast Q4 2026 Data Set used to limit aligned CIPs to programs with current PA completions (2024-2025).

SOC Code	Occupational Title	CIP Code	CIP Title
29-2099	Health Technologists & Technicians, Other	51.0899	Allied Health & Medical Assisting Services, Other
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
31-9091	Dental Assistants	51.0601	Dental Assisting/Assistant
31-9092	Medical Assistants	51.0801	Medical/Clinical Assistant
31-9093	Medical Equipment Preparers	51.1012	Sterile Processing Technology/Technician
31-9096	Veterinary Assistants & Laboratory Animal Caretakers	01.8301	Veterinary Assistant
31-9097	Phlebotomists	51.1009	Phlebotomy Technician/Phlebotomist
33-3012	Correctional Officers & Jailers	43.0102	Corrections
33-3051	Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers	43.0402	Criminalistics & Criminal Science
33-9032	Security Guards	43.0109	Security & Loss Prevention Services
33-9092	Lifeguards, Ski Patrol & Other Recreational Protective Service	43.9999	Homeland Security, Law Enforcement, Firefighting & Related Protective Services, Other
33-9099	Protective Service Workers, Other	43.9999	Homeland Security, Law Enforcement, Firefighting & Related Protective Services, Other
39-5012	Hairdressers, Hairstylists & Cosmetologists	12.0413	Cosmetology, Barber/Styling & Nail Instructor
39-5094	Skincare Specialists	12.0409	Aesthetician/Esthetician & Skin Care Specialist
39-9011	Childcare Workers	19.0709	Child Care Provider/Assistant
41-3021	Insurance Sales Agents	52.1701	Insurance
41-9022	Real Estate Sales Agents	52.1501	Real Estate
43-5031	Police, Fire & Ambulance Dispatchers	52.0101	Business/Commerce, General

SOC Code	Occupational Title	CIP Code	CIP Title
43-5032	Dispatchers	52.0101	Business/Commerce, General
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving & Traffic Clerks	52.0203	Logistics, Materials, and Supply Chain Management
43-6014	Secretaries	52.0401	Administrative Assistant and Secretarial Science, General
47-2031	Carpenters	46.0201	Carpentry/Carpenter
47-2061	Construction Laborers	46.0000	Construction Trades, General
47-2073	Operating Engineers & Other Construction Equipment Operators	49.0202	Construction/Heavy Equipment/Earthmoving Equipment Operation
47-2111	Electricians	46.0302	Electrician
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters & Steamfitters	46.0503	Plumbing Technology/Plumber
47-3013	Helpers--Electricians	46.0302	Electrician
47-4051	Highway Maintenance Workers	49.0202	Construction/Heavy Equipment/Earthmoving Equipment Operation
49-2091	Avionics Technicians	47.0609	Avionics Maintenance Technology/Technician
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics	47.0000	Mechanics & Repairers, General
49-3031	Bus & Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists	47.0605	Diesel Mechanics Technology/Technician
49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics	47.0302	Heavy Equipment Maintenance Technology/Technician
49-9021	Heating, A/C & Refrigeration Mechanics & Installers	47.0201	Heating, A/C, Ventilation & Refrigeration Maint Technology
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	47.0303	Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology/Technician
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers & Repairers	46.0301	Electrical & Power Transmission Installers, General
49-9052	Telecommunications Line Installers & Repairers	46.0303	Lineworker
51-2041	Structural Metal Fabricators & Fitters	48.0503	Machine Shop Technology/Assistant

SOC Code	Occupational Title	CIP Code	CIP Title
51-4041	Machinists	48.0501	Machine Tool Technology/Machinist
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers	48.0508	Welding Technology/Welder
51-8031	Water & Wastewater Treatment Plant & System Operators	15.0506	Water Quality & Wastewater Treatment Mgmt & Recycling Techs
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers & Weighers	15.0702	Quality Control Technology/Technician
51-9161	CNC Tool Operators	48.0510	Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) Machinist Technology/CNC Machinist
51-9199	Production Workers, Other	48.0503	Machine Shop Technology/Assistant
53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	49.0205	Truck & Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator & Instructor
53-3033	Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers	49.0205	Truck & Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator & Instructor
53-3051	Bus Drivers, School	49.0205	Truck & Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator & Instructor
53-3052	Bus Drivers, Transit & Intercity	49.0205	Truck & Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator & Instructor
53-3053	Shuttle Drivers & Chauffeurs	49.0205	Truck & Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator & Instructor
53-4031	Railroad Conductors & Yardmasters	49.0208	Railroad & Railway Transportation
53-7021	Crane & Tower Operators	49.0206	Mobil Crane Operation/Operator

*The CIP codes listed are not exhaustive. If an institution believes that its assigned CIP code aligns with an eligible SOC Code, please contact ra-edpaworkforcepell@pa.gov for further review and discussion.