Pennsylvania
Department of Education

PA Workforce Pell 2026-27
Initial Occupation Selection Methodology

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

This policy is issued pursuant to the proposed 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. This policy is subject to change in accordance with any revisions to the proposed regulations prior to final adoption.

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 and/or in-demand workforce needs.

Creation of Initial 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 initial federal criteria for Workforce Pell eligibility.

For the initial implementation phase, PDE applied the occupation selection criteria outlined in Appendix A to the full universe of occupations. The criteria reflect the requirements of the proposed Workforce Pell regulations and emphasize labor market demand, credential portability, wage outcomes, and allowable instructional timeframes. Based on this analysis, PDE identified 19 occupations that demonstrate alignment with Workforce Pell eligibility requirements and the potential to support qualifying training programs. Each occupation was evaluated independently. 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.

The initial list of 19 occupations is provided in [Table 1](#).Table 1: Initial List of Workforce Pell Eligible Occupations

SOC Code	Occupational Title
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Non-Postsecondary
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians
29-2081	Opticians, Dispensing
29-2099	Health Technologists & Technicians, Other
31-1120	Home Health & Personal Care Aides
31-1131	Nursing Assistants
31-9096	Veterinary Assistants
31-9097	Phlebotomists
49-9021	Heating, A/C & Refrigeration Mechanics & Installers
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers & Repairers
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers & Brazers
53-3032	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers
47-2031	Carpenters
47-2111	Electricians
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters & Steamfitters
49-9052	Telecommunications Line Installers & Repairers
51-9161	CNC Tool Operators

Role of Institutions and Program Data Collection

Once the endorsement of the initial occupation list by SWDB is received, PDE will 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 in order 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 CIP Codes identified in Appendix B 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 eligibility determination.

To qualify for 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 final list of the initial 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 list will be submitted to the USDE 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 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 to determine eligibility of new occupations and programs, and 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
Potential Articulation Agreements	Yes	Credentials must be stackable and portable across multiple employers.	SOC-CIP Program Match
Entry Level Wages	$23,475[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 2024)—Median Entry-Level Wage[2]
Projected Annual Demand	100 or more	Program must be aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry or occupation, as defined by a state's governor.	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.	State Licensure Requirements or Lightcast Job Posting Industry Credential
Credential Demand (for reference not criteria)	Top 1,000 skills listed in job postings	Legitimacy of industry credential in hiring.	Lightcast, Unique Postings by Industry Credential Dec 2024-Dec 2025

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.[1]

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

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

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

SOC Code	SOC Title	CIP Code	CIP Title
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration Mechanics & Installers	47.0201	Heating, A/C, Ventilation & Refrigeration Maint 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
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

*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.