WASHINGTON STATE

Workforce Pell Application Guidance

Pilot Year Application Process for Workforce Pell Program Eligibility

Introduction

Beginning in July 2026, the federal government is set to implement a historic expansion of the Pell Grant Program: Workforce Pell. This long-awaited funding will expand Pell Grant eligibility to cover the cost of high-quality, short-term training programs.

Authority and Purpose

The 119th U.S. Congress H.R. 1 (2025) established the Workforce Pell Grant Program under Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA), which covers federal student financial aid. Workforce Pell expands the federal Pell Grant to short-term workforce training programs. Workforce Pell has an effective start date of July 1, 2026, and was developed with the purpose of:

- Expanding postsecondary education funding to short-term, workforce training programs;
- Identifying and promoting credentials and training programs aligned with high-skill, high-wage, in-demand occupations; and
- Ensuring the outcomes-based evaluation of programs, including completion rates, job placement rates, and value-added earnings.

This application process has been developed pursuant to the final Workforce Pell regulations and establishes the procedures to implement and administer Workforce Pell in Washington. This document includes guidance for defining key terms, determining provider and program eligibility, defining application processes, establishing program approval and performance standards, determining ongoing compliance needs, and determining effective appeals processes. This guidance governs Washington's initial pilot application cycle. The state will evaluate the pilot experience and refine the process, forms, and language in subsequent cycles.

How the Washington Application Process Works

Washington uses one Workforce Pell application, administered through the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), as the state's front door, with verification steps performed by the state agency that already works with each type of institution. Final state approval rests with the Workforce Pell Cross-Agency Steering Committee and the Governor. The path has four steps:

1. **Agency verification.** The institution completes the verification step with the agency that serves its institution type (see pathways below). The agency verifies eligibility items using its existing systems and authorities wherever possible and issues a verification letter for each eligible program.
2. **WSAC final application.** All institutions submit the Workforce Pell final application through the WSAC e-mail, regardless of which agency completed the verification, attaching its agency verification letter. The

final application collects only the institution and program information the Governor's certification requires.

3. **Steering Committee review and Governor certification.** WSAC compiles verified applications for the Cross-Agency Steering Committee, which reviews all proposed programs — regardless of institution type — and advances approved programs to the Governor for certification. The state returns the Governor's certification to the institution.
4. **Federal submission.** The institution submits the Governor's certification with its application to the U.S. Department of Education (E-App), including any Program Participation Agreement (PPA) updates or requirements as identified by the institution's accreditor. Institutions must notify WSAC when the Department approves their programs.

On the back end, WSAC shares application data with the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) so that approved program information is populated in Career Bridge, the state's public-facing training program directory and system of record for program data.

Verification Pathways by Institution Type

Your program type	Verification agency	Verification form
Community and technical college (CTC) programs, including CTC-sponsored Registered Apprenticeship related supplemental instruction (RSI)	State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC)	SBCTC Workforce Pell Verification Form
Private career schools; Registered Apprenticeship programs not administered through a CTC	Workforce Board / Career Bridge	Workforce Board / Career Bridge Workforce Pell Verification Form
Public and private four-year institutions, including Registered Apprenticeships affiliated with a four-year institution	Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC)	WSAC Four-Year Institution Workforce Pell Verification Form

Providers begin at the **WSAC Workforce Pell webpage**, which routes each institution type to the correct verification pathway. There is no wrong door: each agency's page links to the others and to the WSAC final application.

Equal Treatment Across Institution Types

Workforce Pell eligibility is a single bar. Every applicant — four-year institution, a community or technical college, a private career school, or apprenticeship sponsor— is evaluated against the same eligibility requirements, using the same definitions and evidence standards. What differs is only who performs the verification and how each agency uses its existing systems, authorities, and data to do so. This division of labor builds on infrastructure the state already operates and reduces burden on providers. Two safeguards protect equal treatment: every requirement, attestation, and form of acceptable evidence is stated in this one published document and applies uniformly; and the Cross-Agency Steering Committee reviews all verified applications together, across institution types, before any program advances to the Governor.

Institutional Eligibility

To offer an eligible workforce program, the institution must be eligible to participate in federal financial aid programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA) in Washington. The institution must maintain an active Program Participation Agreement (PPA) with the U.S. Department of Education.

The institution must be in good standing and must not have been subject to any suspension, emergency action, or termination of programs by the U.S. Secretary of Education during the five years immediately preceding the date of eligibility determination. It is the responsibility of each institution to ensure that it is in good standing with accreditors and the Department of Education.

In addition, during this pilot year, the institution must:

- Be legally authorized or licensed to operate in Washington State (for private career schools, this includes current licensure through the Workforce Board's Private Vocational Schools program; for degree-granting institutions, applicable WSAC authorization);
- Be accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education, with the Workforce Pell program within the scope of that accreditation; and
- Have a physical address in the state of Washington.

Federally Defined Program Eligibility Criteria

To qualify for approval from the Workforce Pell Cross-Agency Steering Committee and the Governor, programs must satisfy all federal Workforce Pell eligibility requirements. Specifically, a program must:

- Be an undergraduate program that provides at least 8 but less than 15 weeks of instruction (weeks need not be sequential);
- Be 150-599 clock hours, at least 4 but less than 16 semester or trimester hours, or at least 6 but less than 24 quarter hours, consistent with 34 CFR 690.92(b);
- Not be a correspondence, study abroad, or direct assessment course, and not count remedial coursework toward Pell-eligible hours;
- Have operated for at least one year prior to the date of the Governor's approval of the program, during which time program eligibility requirements were met;
- Have a program completion rate of at least 70% within 150% of the stated time to completion and a job placement rate of at least 70% within the second quarter after exiting;
- Ensure that no more than 25 percent of instruction is provided by an ineligible institution or organization, or less than 50 percent if the instruction is a related instruction component for a Registered Apprenticeship;
- Satisfy the federal value-added earnings requirement that the institution's published tuition and fees must not exceed the value-added earnings the U.S. Secretary of Education calculates and publishes for the award year, and a program with zero or negative value-added earnings is ineligible (34 CFR 690.95);
- Not be provided by an institution that is subject to any suspension, emergency, or termination action by the U.S. Secretary of Education during the five years preceding the date of determination;

- Provide an education aligned with the requirements of high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations;
- Lead to a recognized postsecondary credential that is stackable and portable (or prepares students for employment for which there is only one recognized postsecondary credential); and
- Ensure that a student receives academic credit for the program for at least one certificate or degree program at one or more eligible institutions.

How this applies to Registered Apprenticeships. A Title IV-eligible institution—a college or school that can award federal student aid—must teach more than half of a program. A sponsor or other organization that cannot award federal aid may teach part of it: up to one-quarter of the program in general, or up to (but less than) half when the coursework is the related supplemental instruction (RSI) of a Registered Apprenticeship. An apprenticeship qualifies for Workforce Pell only if a Title IV-eligible institution delivers more than 50% of its RSI. An apprenticeship whose RSI is run entirely by the sponsor, with no eligible institution involved, cannot qualify, even though sponsors may apply through the Workforce Board pathway. The apprenticeship deeming provision (34 CFR 690.93(g)) waives only the in-demand and employer-hiring requirements; it does not change this majority-of-instruction rule.

State-Defined Eligibility Criteria

For institutions seeking Workforce Pell eligibility for a program, the program must satisfy all federally defined eligibility criteria identified above, and adhere to the state's defined eligibility criteria, as detailed in this section. These state-defined criteria ensure that Workforce Pell funds are invested in programs aligned with high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations and that provide clear pathways for continued education. This section establishes guidance for: Priority Occupation Methodology, Employer Validation, Stackability and Portability, and Program-to-Credit Articulation.

Priority Occupation Methodology

This section establishes a data-driven process to ensure that Workforce Pell-funded programs prepare participants for employment in occupations that are high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand.

- **High-Skill:** occupations that require a credential or degree above a high school diploma;
- **High-Wage:** occupations that pay an hourly wage at or above self-sufficiency, which is calculated statewide based on the self-sufficiency standard produced by the University of Washington (currently $20.46/hour for 2025);
- **In-Demand:** an occupation included in the statewide approved Workforce Pell Eligible Occupations list produced by the Employment Security Department (ESD) for Workforce Pell purposes.

All training programs eligible to receive Workforce Pell dollars must prepare participants for work in a priority occupation. To be considered “priority,” occupations must meet all of the definitions above for a high-skill, high-wage, in-demand occupation, as determined by the ESD and reflected on the approved Workforce Pell Eligible Occupations List. This applies only to institutions and participants seeking to access Workforce Pell funding. It does not establish occupation requirements for other state or federal workforce or education programs unless explicitly stated.

For the pilot, Washington uses a single approved method to demonstrate that a program prepares participants for a priority occupation: the SOC code(s) the program prepares students for must appear on the

approved Workforce Pell Eligible Occupations List (123 occupations), which reflects occupations that are in demand and pay at or above the self-sufficiency wage. No labor market surveys, employer letters, or alternative methods are used to demonstrate demand during the pilot. A program that provides the related supplemental instruction (RSI) of a Registered Apprenticeship meets this requirement automatically. Providers enter their program's SOC code(s); the verifying agency confirms eligibility status using the approved list and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) CIP-SOC Crosswalk.

The approved occupations are included below:

SOC Code	SOC Title
112021	Marketing Managers
113031	Financial Managers
119032	Education Administrators, Kindergarten through Secondary
119041	Architectural and Engineering Managers
119051	Food Service Managers
119111	Medical and Health Services Managers
119141	Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers
131041	Compliance Officers
131071	Human Resources Specialists
131081	Logisticians
131111	Management Analysts
131121	Meeting, Convention, and Event Planners
131131	Fundraisers
131151	Training and Development Specialists
131161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists
131199	Business Operations Specialists, All Other
132052	Personal Financial Advisors
132099	Financial Specialists, All Other
151211	Computer Systems Analysts
151212	Information Security Analysts
151221	Computer and Information Research Scientists
151232	Computer User Support Specialists
151241	Computer Network Architects
151242	Database Administrators
151252	Software Developers
151254	Web Developers
151299	Computer Occupations, All Other
152051	Data Scientists
172051	Civil Engineers
172071	Electrical Engineers
172112	Industrial Engineers
172141	Mechanical Engineers
173026	Industrial Engineering Technologists and Technicians
191042	Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists
192041	Environmental Scientists and Specialists, Including Health
193039	Psychologists, All Other

194021	Biological Technicians
195011	Occupational Health and Safety Specialists
195012	Occupational Health and Safety Technicians
211012	Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors
211013	Marriage and Family Therapists
211019	Counselors, All Other
211021	Child, Family, and School Social Workers
211022	Healthcare Social Workers
211094	Community Health Workers
231011	Lawyers
251194	Career/Technical Education Teachers, Postsecondary
252012	Kindergarten Teachers, Except Special Education
252021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education
252022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
252031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
252059	Special Education Teachers, All Other
253099	Teachers and Instructors, All Other
271021	Commercial and Industrial Designers
272022	Coaches and Scouts
273031	Public Relations Specialists
273043	Writers and Authors
291021	Dentists, General
291031	Dietitians and Nutritionists
291051	Pharmacists
291071	Physician Assistants
291122	Occupational Therapists
291123	Physical Therapists
291126	Respiratory Therapists
291131	Veterinarians
291141	Registered Nurses
291171	Nurse Practitioners
291215	Family Medicine Physicians
291229	Physicians, All Other
291292	Dental Hygienists
292031	Cardiovascular Technologists and Technicians
292032	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers
292034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians
292035	Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologists
292052	Pharmacy Technicians
292055	Surgical Technologists
292056	Veterinary Technologists and Technicians
292061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses
299099	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Workers, All Other
311131	Nursing Assistants
312021	Physical Therapist Assistants

319011	Massage Therapists
319091	Dental Assistants
319092	Medical Assistants
319097	Phlebotomists
319099	Healthcare Support Workers, All Other
339021	Private Detectives and Investigators
339032	Security Guards
339091	Crossing Guards and Flaggers
351012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers
352012	Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria
352014	Cooks, Restaurant
371011	First-Line Supervisors of Housekeeping and Janitorial Workers
371012	First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers
391022	First-Line Supervisors of Personal Service Workers
393011	Gambling Dealers
395011	Barbers
395012	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists
395092	Manicurists and Pedicurists
396012	Concierges
413031	Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents
413091	Sales Representatives of Services, Except Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services, and Travel
414011	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products
414012	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products
419022	Real Estate Sales Agents
431011	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers
434199	Information and Record Clerks, All Other
435021	Couriers and Messengers
435032	Dispatchers, Except Police, Fire, and Ambulance
436013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants
436014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive
439199	Office and Administrative Support Workers, All Other
491011	First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers
493011	Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians
493023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics
499041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics
499071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General
512011	Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers
513023	Slaughterers and Meat Packers
531049	First-Line Supervisors of Transportation Workers, All Other
532031	Flight Attendants
533031	Driver/Sales Workers
533052	Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity

Employer Validation

To qualify for Workforce Pell, every program must provide clear evidence of employer or industry validation. Eligible institutions seeking an eligibility determination for their program must submit evidence to demonstrate that:

- The program prepares participants for employment in a designated priority occupation as specified in this guidance;
- Employers are currently hiring or anticipate hiring for the associated occupation in the next year;
- The skills, competencies, and credentials taught in the program seeking eligibility determination align with specific employer expectations and hiring standards.

Institutions seeking a Workforce Pell eligibility determination for their program must meet this requirement, for the pilot, through one or more of the following:

- **Employer engagement attestation.** Providers attest to the form(s) of employer engagement that have occurred within the last twelve months connected to the program, selecting any that apply: employers helped develop the curriculum; employers helped review the program; employers helped identify skills or competencies; employers serve on an advisory board; employers provide work-based learning; employers provide hiring preference or interviews; or labor-management or sector-partnership involvement.
- **Existing agency mechanisms.** Employer validation is further embedded in the existing processes each verifying agency administers: for community and technical colleges, the SBCTC program approval process, which incorporates employer advisory engagement; and for private career schools, Workforce Board Private Vocational Schools licensing requirements.

Registered Apprenticeship RSI programs meet the employer hiring requirement automatically and are not required to complete the attestation. The state will consider additional employer-validation options in later iterations of this guidance.

Stackability and Portability

A stackable credential is defined as a recognized postsecondary credential that, through attaining two or more credentials within the same or complementary occupational area(s), increases a learner's likelihood of employment and increased wages, and provides seamless progression, meaning a learner does not lose time or credit when transitioning into additional education and training.

An eligible program must lead to a recognized postsecondary credential that is stackable and portable or must prepare students for employment for which there is only one recognized postsecondary credential (a single terminal credential). For the pilot, providers attest that the credential is stackable and portable—or briefly describe the single terminal credential and its field—and attach at least one form of the evidence listed below. For single-terminal credentials, the provider also confirms that the program prepares students to continue toward a certificate or degree, with academic credit accepted toward that credential (34 CFR 690.93(a)).

A credential may be determined to be stackable if one or more of the following are documented:

- A written agreement establishing that academic credit is awarded upon successful completion of the workforce program and that it can be applied toward a certificate or degree program;

- An articulation or transfer-of-credit agreement specifying the number and type of credits awarded for the eligible workforce program;
- A pre-evaluated credit designation has been awarded for the program through credit for prior learning policies;
- Published pathway maps showing progression from the eligible program to at least one credit-bearing certificate or degree with increasing labor market value;
- Evidence that the pathway has been established and in use for at least one year;
- Documentation demonstrating no administrative or institutional barriers to advancement between credentials.

A credential may be determined to be portable if one or more of the following are documented:

- Recognition by multiple employers within an eligible occupation; may be established through related Workforce Pell employer validation requirements;
- Status as an industry-recognized credential, as established by the American Council on Education National Guide or other evidence;
- Evidence from labor market information indicating broad occupational relevance.

Program-to-Credit Articulation

This process establishes the criteria to define and validate program-to-credit articulation for the purposes of Workforce Pell eligibility. It ensures that short-term, industry-aligned training programs provide opportunities for immediate labor market entry or upskilling/reskilling, and for seamless progression into longer-term education and training, including credit-bearing certificate and degree programs.

A Workforce Pell-eligible program may be determined to meet program-to-credit articulation requirements if one or more of the following conditions are documented:

- A written agreement establishing that academic credit is awarded upon successful completion of the workforce program and that it can be applied toward a certificate or degree program;
- An articulation or transfer-of-credit agreement specifying the number and type of credits awarded for the eligible workforce program;
- A pre-evaluated credit designation has been awarded for the program through credit for prior learning policies;
- A consortium, partnership, or system-level agreement confirming credit acceptance or transferability across participating institutions or institutions; and
- Other formal documentation demonstrating guaranteed or standardized credit recognition upon enrollment in a certificate or degree program.

The verification and application review process shall verify that the credential stacks or provides articulated credit into a credit-bearing academic pathway, maintains industry support, and is aligned with the state's high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations list. There must be a firm commitment to articulation with at least one program, internal or external to the institution; details essential to that commitment must be in place, while lesser details may still be in development, provided there is clear documentation of articulation.

To the extent possible, institutions should report credential progression rates, defined as the number of learners who earn an initial Workforce Pell-eligible credential and then pursue additional education and training that result in an additional recognized postsecondary credential.

The Application Process

Institutions seeking a determination of state eligibility for any short-term workforce training program must submit a separate, completed application for each program.

- Application Intake Portal: All applications, supporting artifacts, and institutional data submissions must be processed electronically to the WSAC Workforce Pell e-mail address (wsacworkforcepell@wsac.wa.gov) after completion of agency verification, as described below.
- Application Completeness: Applications must contain all required data fields, including the program name, the agency verification letter, and formal institutional attestations. Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes are entered only if known and are confirmed by the verifying agency from the CIP–SOC crosswalk. Incomplete submissions shall be returned to the institution without formal review. For a complete list of requirements, reference the "data requirements" section.

Step 1 — Agency Verification

The institution completes the verification form for its institution type (see the pathways table above) and submits a separate form for each program. The verifying agency reviews the submission, confirms items it can verify from its own systems and records, for example, SBCTC through ctcLink and SBCTC records; the Workforce Board through Career Bridge, the ETPL, and federal records (DAPIP); and WSAC through the institutional lists it maintains, and, for each eligible program, issues a verification letter on agency letterhead. Wherever an agency can verify an item from its own data, the provider is not asked to submit separate documentation. Providers submit aggregate or de-identified information only; no personally identifiable information (PII) is included unless the state subsequently requests it.

Step 2 — WSAC Final Application

After receiving its verification letter, the institution submits the Workforce Pell final application to the WSAC e-mail address. The final application collects only the information required for the Governor's State Workforce Pell Program Certification (OMB 1845-0189): confirmation of the verification pathway with the letter attached; institution information (name, OPE ID, address, authorized representative, contact information); program information (program name, 6-digit CIP code, SOC code) for each verified program; and certification and signature, including authorization for WSAC and partner agencies (SBCTC, WTB, ESD, ERDC, and others as needed) to verify information through state and federal data systems. The state completes the remaining certification items: the date each program met eligibility requirements, its completion rate, and its job placement rate from state administrative data. Providers do not calculate or report these items.

Data Requirements

The institution will be required to submit the student-record data the state needs to verify outcomes, including a list of program entrants and completers with unique identifiers for the relevant period, through

the channel specified by its verifying agency, in accordance with applicable data-sharing agreements. The state matches these records with wage records to calculate placement.

Institutions will be required to submit participant data and a state certification, accompanied by any verification and supporting documentation required by the U.S. Department of Education, sufficient to demonstrate that the program has:

- A program completion rate of at least 70% within 150% of the stated time to completion; and
- A job placement rate of at least 70% within the second quarter after exiting the program, verified through ESD wage record matching and state administrative data. Providers do not calculate outcomes or collect earnings information from students.

Review Process

Washington will use a multi-tier review process administered by the Workforce Pell Cross-Agency Steering Committee in partnership with WSAC, SBCTC, and Workforce Board. The review reflects the four-step path described above:

- Agency Verification: The verifying agency (SBCTC, the Workforce Board, or WSAC, by institution type) confirms institutional eligibility, program format requirements, operating history, priority occupation alignment, employer validation, stackability and portability, and program-to-credit articulation, and issues a verification letter for each eligible program.
- Intake and Completeness Check: Upon submission of the final application, WSAC verifies that all required fields are complete and the verification letter is attached; incomplete submissions are returned without formal review.
- Outcome Verification: The state verifies through administrative data (ctcLink, ERDC, and ESD wage records) that the program meets federal performance baselines of at least a 70% completion rate within 150% of the normal time to completion and a 70% job placement rate within the second quarter after exit.
- Steering Committee Review: WSAC compiles all verified, complete applications into a recommendation package. The Cross-Agency Steering Committee reviews all proposed programs together, across institution types, at the program level; it does not review student-level records or PII.
- Final Approval: Programs advanced by the Steering Committee are submitted to the Governor for final state certification. Denied applicants receive a written notice documenting the reason for denial and describing the appeal process.

Federal Approval

Institutions with programs that are approved by the Steering Committee and certified by the Governor will receive a certification from the state, which is required to submit their programs for approval to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) through the Department's E-App process, including any required updates to the institution's Program Participation Agreement. Institutions must notify WSAC when their programs are approved by ED. Approved programs will be reflected in Career Bridge and on the state's published list of Workforce Pell-approved programs.

Appeals

Applicants whose programs have been denied may appeal the decision. Washington uses a single appeal process, administered at the application level; applicants do not appeal individual verification steps. There is one bar for eligibility and one process for contesting a determination that the bar was not met. Appeals should be submitted as follows:

- Within 30 calendar days from the date of the denial notice, the applicant may file an appeal with WSAC, as the administrative front door on behalf of the Workforce Pell Cross-Agency Steering Committee, by submitting a written statement appealing the denial and information as to why the training program should be eligible;
- Applicants should also submit any documentation pertaining to the program that could support the appeal; for example, data or records demonstrating that the program met a threshold the state's determination found unmet; and
- The written appeal should be submitted to WSAC at wsacworkforcepell@wsac.wa.gov.

The Cross-Agency Steering Committee will review the appeal using the provided information and issue a written decision within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the appeal. The Committee's decision is the final state administrative decision.

Scope of appeals: an appeal contests whether the program met the published eligibility requirements, most commonly the outcome thresholds, where an applicant believes it has data demonstrating that the 70% completion or job placement bar was met. An appeal is not a vehicle to propose alternative eligibility criteria, occupations, or methods. Where an appeal turns on a data discrepancy, the relevant agency reviews the applicant's submitted data against state administrative data using its existing data-review processes.

Program Determination Timeline

To provide predictable planning cycles for participating institutions, the State adheres to a strict annual review calendar and processing timeline. Pilot-cycle dates below are proposed and will be confirmed and published on the **WSAC Workforce Pell webpage**.

Milestone	Action	2026-2027 AY (Cycle 1)	2026-2027 AY (Cycle 2)
Portal Opening (twice per year)	The application process opens on the WSAC Workforce Pell webpage, which includes this guidance, the approved Workforce Pell Eligible Occupations List, and the verification pathways for the upcoming academic year.	October 2026	January 2027
Provider Webinar	WSAC-hosted webinar walking providers through the verification and application process; questions inform published FAQs.	October 2026	January 2027
Agency Verification	Verifying agencies complete verification and issue verification letters on a rolling basis; WSAC conducts completeness checks and	October – November 2026	January–February 2027

Milestone	Action	2026-2027 AY (Cycle 1)	2026-2027 AY (Cycle 2)
	outcome verification upon final application submission		
Application Deadline	The application window closes. Submissions received after this date may be deferred to later evaluation cycles.	November 2026	February 2027
Steering Committee Review & Decision	The Cross-Agency Steering Committee convenes to review the compiled recommendation package and advance approved programs to the Governor for certification.	November 2026	February 2027
Determination Notice	The State issues formal Certification Letters of approval or Notices of Application Denial to the applying institutions.	Following Committee review	Following Committee review
Appellate Filing Window	Denied institutions must submit their formal written appeal and all supporting evidence within 30 calendar days of the denial notice.	Per denial notice date	Per denial notice date
Final Appeal Decision	The Cross-Agency Steering Committee reviews the record and a final, non-appealable administrative decision is issued within 30 calendar days of receipt.	Per appeal receipt date	Per appeal receipt date

Ongoing Compliance and Maintenance

This process and outcomes associated with Workforce Pell-eligible programs will be reviewed to assess the effectiveness of the priority occupations criteria or as implementation experience warrants.

Each year after the Workforce Pell-eligible program is approved, institutions must:

- Submit a list of all students who entered the program (including unique identifiers) who completed the program during the award year and the information necessary for the state (via ESD wage records and established data channels) to verify job placement; and
- Report the published tuition and fees for the eligible program through a process determined by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

Moreover, institutions with eligible programs approved by the State of Washington must notify their verifying agency (which will notify the Cross-Agency Steering Committee) when:

- Material changes are made to an approved program's structure, curriculum, delivery method, employer alignment, or credential outcomes; and
- The training provider voluntarily ceases to offer a program. If an institution voluntarily discontinues a failing eligible program, the institution may not reestablish that program, or a substantially similar program (34 CFR 690.97) until two years after the date of losing eligibility.

Note that modifying an existing program — including adjustments made to meet Workforce Pell eligibility criteria — restarts the one-year operational requirement: the program must operate in its modified format

for at least one year before it can be certified. The state will monitor program compliance while programs are Workforce Pell-eligible, consistent with federal requirements, including during institutions' PPA renewals with Federal Student Aid.

Methodology and Process Update Cycle

Additionally, the priority occupations list and accompanying determination policies (employer validation, stackability and portability, program-to-credit articulation) will be reviewed at least every two years by the Cross-Agency Steering Committee (or its successor administrative home), in alignment with the WIOA State Plan modification process. The priority occupations list may be reviewed more frequently if significant labor market shifts occur or federal guidance changes.

Definitions

Accreditor: Private educational associations recognized by the Department of Education that develop evaluation criteria and conduct peer evaluations to assess whether or not those criteria are met. Institutions and/or programs that request an accreditor's evaluation and that meet an accreditor's criteria are then "accredited."

Agency Verification: The first step of Washington's Workforce Pell application, in which the state agency serving a provider's institution type (SBCTC, the Workforce Board, or WSAC) verifies eligibility items and issues a verification letter. Agency verification is a verification step within the single state application; it is not a separate program approval;

Career Bridge: Washington's public-facing directory of education and training programs, administered by the Workforce Board, and the system of record for Workforce Pell program data;

CIP Code: A taxonomy of instructional program classifications and descriptions developed by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Specific programs offered by institutions are classified using a six-digit CIP code;

CIP-SOC Crosswalk: CIP-SOC Crosswalk matches 6-digit CIP codes with 6-digit SOC codes based on their occupational and programmatic descriptions. Matching CIP and SOC codes means the academic program provides the skills and knowledge required to perform a given occupation;

Cross-Agency Steering Committee: The Workforce Pell Cross-Agency Steering Committee established by the Governor — comprising SBCTC, WSAC, the Workforce Board, ESD, L&I, and the Governor's Policy Office — which reviews all verified applications across institution types and advances approved programs to the Governor for certification;

Eligible Training Provider (ETP): ETPs are the only entities that receive federal funding for training services, as defined in § 680.200, through an individual training account, must be included on the State's Eligible Training Provider List, and must be one of the following types of entities: (1) Institutions of higher education that provide a program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential; (2) Entities that carry out programs registered under the National Apprenticeship Act (29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.); or (3) Other public or private providers of training services, which may include: (i) Community-based organizations; (ii) Joint labor-management organizations; and (iii) Eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II of WIOA if such activities are provided in combination with training services described in § 680.350;

Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL): Washington's list of approved training services providers that are eligible to receive federal workforce funding via Title I-B of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), administered by the Workforce Board;

Eligible Workforce Program: An undergraduate program that meets strict statutory and regulatory criteria regarding its length, delivery, outcomes, and alignment with workforce needs for Workforce Pell eligibility;

High-Skill: Occupations that require a credential or degree above a high school diploma;

High-Wage: Occupations that pay an hourly wage at or above self-sufficiency, which is calculated statewide based on the self-sufficiency standard produced by the University of Washington (currently $20.46/hour for 2025);

In-Demand: An occupation included in the approved Workforce Pell Eligible Occupations list produced by the Employment Security Department (ESD);

Non-Title IV-Eligible Provider: Unaccredited entities or organizations that do not meet Title IV eligibility requirements to independently receive and disburse federal financial aid; an ineligible institution or organization may provide no more than 25 percent of the instruction for an eligible workforce program (less than 50 percent for Registered Apprenticeship-related instruction);

Participating Institution: An eligible institution that meets the standards for participation in Title IV, HEA programs in subpart B and has a current program participation agreement with the U.S. Secretary of Education;

Portable credential: A credential is considered portable when it is recognized and accepted as verifying the qualifications of an individual in other settings— such as other geographic areas across the country, other educational institutions, institutions, or other industries or businesses;

Postsecondary Institution: An institution that qualifies as: An institution of higher education, as defined in 34 CFR § 600.4; A proprietary institution of higher education, as defined in 34 CFR § 600.5; or A postsecondary vocational institution, as defined in 34 CFR § 600.6;

Program Participation Agreement (PPA): A formal agreement that an institution of higher education must enter into with the U.S. Department of Education to be eligible to participate in and disburse Title IV federal financial aid;

Program-to-Credit Articulation: Formal articulation agreements, pre-evaluated credit for prior learning, or other policies written by institutions and institutions that apply industry-recognized certificates or certifications, occupational licenses, or registered apprenticeships towards academic credit for specific courses within a certificate or degree program;

Recognized Postsecondary Credential: Includes an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of a Registered Apprenticeship (defined under 29 CFR part 29,) a license recognized by the State involved or Federal Government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree;

Registered Apprenticeship Program: An industry-driven, high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience with a mentor, receive progressive wage increases, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally-recognized credential. Registered Apprenticeships are industry-vetted, approved, and validated by the U.S. Department of Labor or a State Apprenticeship Agency (in Washington, L&I). Related supplemental instruction (RSI) refers to the classroom instruction component of a Registered Apprenticeship;

Self-Sufficiency Standard: The statewide wage standard produced by the University of Washington used to define high-wage occupations for Workforce Pell purposes;

Short-Term Program: A program of study that is at least 150 clock hours but less than 600 instructional clock hours (or the credit hours equivalent) offered by an eligible institution at least 8 but less than 15 weeks, which need not be sequential;

SOC Code: Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Code is used by federal agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, or disseminating data;

Stackable Credential: A recognized postsecondary credential that, through attaining two or more credentials within the same or complementary occupational area(s), increases a learner's likelihood of employment and increased wages, and provides seamless progression; a learner does not lose time or credit when transitioning into additional education and training; and

State Workforce Development Board: A State workforce development board established under section 101 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and 20 CFR 679 Subpart A. In Washington, this is the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board). The State Workforce Development Board advises the Governor for Workforce Pell program determination and approval;

Verification Letter: The letter a verifying agency issues for each eligible program at the conclusion of agency verification, documenting that the program meets the verified requirements; attached by the provider to the WSAC final application. Standard subject line: "Washington Workforce Pell Verification — [Institution] — [Program]."

WSAC Final Application: The application submitted through the WSAC portal after agency verification, collecting the institution and program information required for the Governor's State Workforce Pell Program Certification (OMB 1845-0189).