Workforce Pell FAQ: For Practitioners

An expansion of what types of programs can be eligible for the Pell Grant went into effect on July 1, 2026. Here are some frequently asked questions we've heard from practitioners across the country about Workforce Pell, along with what we know so far.

What is Workforce Pell?
H.R. 1, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, passed in 2025, allows low-income students to use the Pell Grant to pay for short-term, career-focused training programs that lead to high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand credentials.

What are the requirements for a program to be eligible for Workforce Pell?
To be eligible, programs need to meet the following requirements:

- Short-term program (150–599 clock hours; 8–14 weeks in length)
- Training aligned to high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations
- Lead to a recognized postsecondary credential
- Operating and meeting all criteria for at least 12 months before approval.
- Offered by Title IV–eligible institutions of higher education
- Completion and job placement rates of at least 70 percent. Beginning in the 2029-30 award year, 70% of completers must be employed in the occupation for which the program trained them
- Meet a value-added earnings test (tuition and fees cannot exceed the median earnings for program completers minus 150% of the Federal Poverty Level, measured three years after completion)

Programs must be certified by their state governor and then approved by the US Department of Education.

What programs are eligible for the Workforce Pell?
Currently, very few programs have made it through the full approval process. Each state is implementing its own process and timeline. We expect more programs to become eligible throughout 2026-27. Check out information on each state on opportunitydata.org.

Once programs are approved, we expect each state to maintain a list of eligible programs. Here is an example from Iowa.

How much Pell grant can students receive for an eligible program?
The amount of Pell Grant a student will be eligible to receive depends on their SAI or max/min Pell eligibility, and the awards will be prorated based on the length or clock hours in their program. This means students will not receive the maximum Pell Grant of $7,395 for a short-term program. To see examples provided by the Department of Education, click here.

Does Workforce Pell impact future Pell eligibility?
Students can currently receive a Pell Grant for up to 12 full-time semesters of college. When a student attends a program and uses Workforce Pell to pay for it, their lifetime eligibility is reduced based on the percentage of their Pell eligibility they use. For example, if a student is eligible for a maximum Pell Grant and enrolls in a program where they are eligible for a $1,000 Workforce Pell Grant. This means they are using 13.5% ($1,000/$7,395) of their Pell eligibility for that year, which will reduce their lifetime eligibility.

What do students need to do to access Workforce Pell?
Students must meet all the current eligibility requirements of the Pell Grant. In addition, a student who has completed a bachelor's degree is eligible to receive Workforce Pell, but not a student who has completed a graduate degree. Students may not receive concurrent Pell Grants for more than one eligible program at a time.

To access Workforce Pell, students must complete the FAFSA and be enrolled in a program deemed eligible by their state and approved by the Department of Education.

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