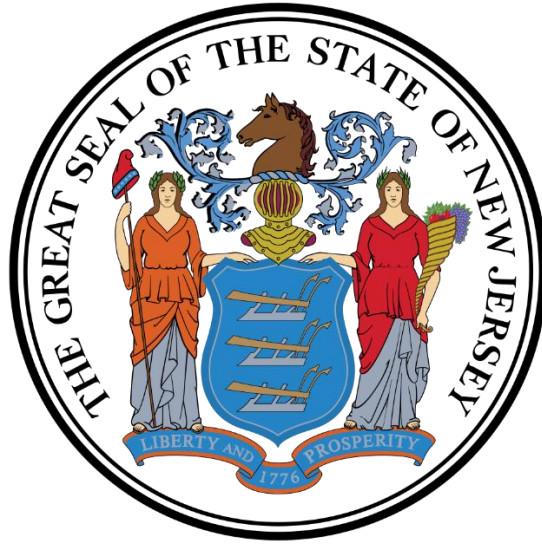




State of New Jersey
Workforce Pell Eligibility Determination Processes
2026-2027 Pilot Year

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Introduction

The Workforce Pell program represents a significant opportunity to advance economic mobility for working families by expanding access to eligible high-quality, short-term career training programs. In anticipation of its implementation the State assembled a Workforce Pell Interagency Working Group (WPIWG) to coordinate and oversee the program's development and continuous improvement. Led by a collaboration between the New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development (NJLW) and the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE), the WPIWG includes the Governor's Office, the New Jersey Department of Education, the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, and the State Employment and Training Commission. These agencies bring diverse expertise and a vested interest in supporting program effectiveness.

The WPIWG established the following program goals and design principles for the program's pilot year:

For Learners:

- Strong outcomes: Support learners in achieving meaningful economic and academic success.
- Increased student access: Expand opportunities for individuals, especially under-resourced populations, to participate in workforce training programs.
- Complement existing resources: Enhance and build upon resources available to learners.

For Providers:

- High-quality training portfolio: Develop and offer a robust training portfolio that meets the needs of employers and the State now and into the future.

For State:

- Transparency: Share information to foster trust and alignment to improve decision-making and program outcomes.
- Feasibility: Balance the need for a rapid and straightforward set-up while maintaining a strong approach that meets the program's objectives.

New Jersey's Workforce Pell program aims to create the opportunity for a more skilled workforce driving economic growth and prosperity across the State.

Overview of the Workforce Pell Program

The Workforce Pell program, enacted as part of the 2025 *One Big Beautiful Bill Act* (H.R. 1), extends federal Pell grant eligibility to students in qualifying short-term workforce training programs at Title IV-eligible institutions. To participate in Workforce Pell, training programs must meet standards established by the federal government and implemented by the State, summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Workforce Pell Eligibility Standards administered by New Jersey

Criterion	Requirement
Length	150–599 clock hours (or credit-hour equivalent); 8–14 weeks
In-Demand Occupation	Aligned with an occupation that is on New Jersey’s statewide in-demand occupations list or eligible for a local or regional waiver ¹
Program Maturity	Offered for at least one year prior to approval by the U.S. Department of Education
Completion Rate	At least 70% (within 150% of normal program time)
Job Placement Rate	At least 70% (measured 180 days after completion)
Credential	Leads to a recognized postsecondary credential that is stackable and portable, or the sole recognized credential for that occupation
Credit Articulation	Prepares students for further education; credit or learning accepted toward a related certificate or degree program

For the complete and final federal rules regarding Workforce Pell, please visit: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/05/19/2026-10013/accountability-in-higher-education-and-access-through-demand-driven-workforce-pell-pell-grant>.

¹ The current list of statewide “in-demand occupations” can be found here: <https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/tools-support/demand-occupations>; the list of current local and regional waivers appears here: <https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/tools-support/demand-occupations/waivers.shtml>. Additional occupations may be eligible to receive local or regional waivers based on local labor market information.

State Determination Components

Under the federal Workforce Pell framework, states play a central approval and oversight role in determining which short-term training programs meet the federal standards for Workforce Pell eligibility. The requirements outlined in this section are derived from federal regulations and have been informed by collaborative efforts involving stakeholder working groups and interagency discussions.

The following subsections detail the specific components that the State utilized in operationalizing the eligibility criteria established by the U.S. Department of Education for evaluating programs for Workforce Pell eligibility in the pilot year. Stakeholders reviewed draft policies, validated operational approaches, and contributed to technical assistance and resource support. This document aims to guide participating providers and stakeholders on the standards and process applicable during the pilot year.

Employer Alignment

Alignment with labor market demand is a key pillar of the new Workforce Pell program. New Jersey developed and applied several measures to ensure that Workforce Pell programs would be aligned with labor market demand.

High-Skill, High-Wage, or In-Demand Occupation Determination

The State's determination of in-demand occupations for Workforce Pell eligibility is based on NJDOL's Labor Demand Occupations List, which is reviewed and updated every two years as required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and N.J.S.A. 34:1A-86. Occupations that have received local and regional waivers are also eligible to account for local labor market variation. Registered Apprenticeship Programs are presumptively deemed to meet the in-demand eligibility standard.

To view the list of in-demand occupations: <https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/tools-support/demand-occupations>

To view the list of current local and regional waivers: <https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/tools-support/demand-occupations/waivers.shtml>

To view the methodology for the 2025 Labor Demand list: [2025 Labor Demand Occupations List Methodology Effective 20250701.pdf](#)

Portability

New Jersey's Workforce Pell approval process requires alignment with the New Jersey Labor Demand Occupations List or a current regional or local waiver, so portability determinations apply only to occupations already identified as in-demand. To satisfy Workforce Pell's portability requirement, which ensures that credentials are recognized across employers and geographic areas, a program must also meet one of three standards:

- A. The program prepares students for an occupation with only one recognized postsecondary credential, as established by law, regulation, licensing authority, or

occupational standard, and awards that credential upon completion and passage of a certification or licensing examination where applicable;

OR

- B. The credential awarded is recognized by employers regionally or nationally, as evidenced by job postings, documentation in the Credential Registry, or the standing of the issuing body;

OR

- C. The program confers a credential that prepares students for employment in the occupation, and there is evidence of employer demand for the occupation in the past year across at least two geographic areas:

1. By more than one employer within the county where the program is offered, and;
2. By more than one employer outside that county, including counties within New Jersey or within the New York City or Philadelphia metropolitan statistical areas.

Registered apprenticeship programs are presumptively deemed portable for purposes of Workforce Pell eligibility.

Stackability and Articulation

Workforce Pell program eligibility requires a “stackable” credential, meaning a credential that guarantees academic credit toward an aligned higher-level certificate or degree. This allows individuals to continue advancing their academic, employment and training pathways.

In accordance with 20 U.S.C. 1093a,² an “articulation agreement” is an agreement between or among institutions of higher education that specifies the acceptability of courses in transfer toward meeting specific degree or program requirements.

Key Considerations

To ensure the effectiveness of stackability and articulation to higher-level programs and/or credit, eligible workforce program providers must adopt the following minimum practices:

- 1) Integration of Stackable Credits: Stackable credits must articulate directly into the higher-level curriculum to help students save time and money toward the completion of their next credentials or advance in their careers. All stackable credits must count toward specific credential requirements and remain within the total credit hour limits for the program, including established elective maximums, ensuring students are not burdened with excess credits that do not contribute to degree completion. This is particularly crucial, as Workforce Pell will count toward lifetime use of Pell Grants.
- 2) Vertical Stacking: Key to the Workforce Pell provision and definition, only vertical stacking that connects to higher-level credentials will be considered. While credentials can

² <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-2023-title20-section1093a&num=0&edition=2023>.

be stacked in other ways, horizontal or independent stacking would not meet the Workforce Pell requirement.

- 3) **Transcription of Credits:** Providers must develop a way to transcribe stackable credits accurately to ensure they are properly recorded to allow for immediate and future stackability, should students choose to continue their education at a later date.
- 4) **Credit Currency and Time Limits:** Ideally, credits should not expire; however, if an expiration applies, articulation agreements and/or institutional policies for accepting these credits must clearly identify and provide a rationale for any credit currency or time limits associated with the use of the stackable credits. These limits, if applicable, should be communicated upfront to students.
- 5) **Fair Treatment:** The accepting institution may not utilize additional assessments, such as prior learning assessments or portfolios, for the purpose of awarding academic credit for the Workforce Pell eligible program, nor may they charge for such credit. However, the accepting institution may utilize the notation of credit for prior learning on the transcript.

In addition, the eligible program must ensure credit transferability is consistently applied for all students, regardless of their Workforce Pell eligibility status.

- 6) **Student Awareness and Communication:** Students must be made aware of how credits stack toward their educational and career goals. Clear, early, and regular communication about the Workforce Pell program and related pathways should be provided.

Metrics and Documentation Requirements:

To ensure effective implementation and validation of stackability and articulation for Workforce Pell program eligibility, the following metrics and documentation are required for submission via the program-level survey submission:

- A formal credit articulation agreement(s) OR written institutional policy;
 - The credit articulation agreement or policy should be made publicly available for transparency to stakeholders. The agreement or policy should clearly outline how academic credits are stackable and applied in higher-level certificates, and/or degrees. It should indicate the process and timing for review, ways to track articulation, how students are made aware of how stackable credits can be applied to their educational and career goals, and course currency or time limit policy. The agreement or policy must be signed by authorized representatives from both institutions, and a written institutional policy must be signed by authorized representative(s).
 - While only one aligned, stackable pathway is required, institutions are encouraged to submit articulation agreements for all self/partner institutions and pathways.
 - Submission must include an upload of the agreement/policy and, if possible, a link to the public-facing agreement/policy.
- Name of partner institution(s) or self;

- o The agreement or policy must clearly identify the name of the partner institution involved in the articulation agreement or specify if the institution is self-articulating credits within its own programs.
- Number of academic credits accepted;
 - o The agreement or policy must document the total number of credits that will be accepted from the institution or partner institution.
- Applicable course applied to;
 - o The agreement or policy must specify the course(s) or block credits within the credential, certificate, or degree to which the stackable credits will apply.
- Name of aligned credential, certificate, or degree pathway(s) and 6-digit Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code.

To ensure the effectiveness of the stackability parameter, New Jersey will seek to develop a mechanism to monitor how and when students articulate vertically to higher-level credentials and document the credentials, certificates, or degrees these students ultimately earn. Institutions are strongly encouraged to establish their own systems to track stackability within their programs and partner institutions to verify stackable credits are being appropriately communicated, applied, and recognized.

Accountability and Performance Metrics

All training providers with programs listed on the New Jersey Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) must submit program-level quarterly student reports on all enrollees, which are then matched to Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Records to calculate post-completion employment and wage outcomes. This data is also integrated into the Statewide Data System housed at the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University. The State partnered with the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development to analyze the data collected for Workforce Pell program eligibility. The eligibility requirements in the 2026-2027 academic year include 70 percent completion within 150 percent of the program duration (e.g., within 21 weeks for a 14-week program); and a 70 percent employment rate at 180 days after the program end date.

In 2029-2030, the US Department of Education plans to begin calculating and applying a “value-added earnings” (VAE) metric, and all programs will be required to meet this new eligibility requirement. Final Workforce Pell rules allow states to develop their own interim measure, and New Jersey plans to develop and test its own value-added earnings metric, which will be considered for addition to the other criteria for eligibility in the 2027-2028 academic year.

Also in 2029-2030, states will be required to demonstrate that programs result in employment in the occupation for which students are being trained. To establish occupational employment, states will be required to adopt enhancements to their UI Wage Records. The large majority of states do not currently collect occupational information on their wage records. Waivers will be available in that year for states that are making progress toward adoption of these enhancements.

Opt-Out Process

Upon certification by the Governor of the eligible program roster, the State will issue a written notification to all programs determined to be eligible in the 2026-2027 academic year of Workforce Pell participation and post those program names on the State's Workforce Pell website: [Workforce Pell](#). Eligible programs will have 10 calendar days from receipt of notification and public posting to notify the State in writing via email to TrainingEvaluationUnit@dol.nj.gov with the subject heading "WF Pell Opt-Out" if they elect to withdraw from the Workforce Pell eligible program list for the year. Absent timely written notification to the contrary, the program shall be considered approved and eligible for Workforce Pell participation for the 2026-2027 academic year.

Appeals

A provider that has had its program denied by the State shall have the opportunity to request an appeal. NJDOL will provide its determination in writing to such a provider along with a statement that sets forth the reason or reasons for the denial. The provider shall have 10 business days after receiving such notice from the NJDOL to submit its appeal in writing to TrainingEvaluationUnit@dol.nj.gov with the subject heading "Workforce Pell Appeal: Provider Name." The request must set forth the reasons that the training provider believes that the State should approve the program(s), as well as submit any additional documentation or data needed. Upon receipt of the request:

1. The NJDOL shall confirm receipt of the appeals request within 5 business days;
2. The NJDOL shall convene a three-member panel within 15 business days of receipt of the request for appeal. The three-member panel shall be comprised of State Workforce Pell Interagency staff representing NJDOL, OSHE, New Jersey Department of Education, New Jersey Economic Development Authority, New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs, or Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, who were not involved in the initial determination;
3. The panel will review the appeal submission;
4. The panel will make a recommendation as to whether the NJDOL should overturn the denial within 30 business days of the appeal;
5. The final NJDOL decision will be sent to the training provider in writing within seven business days of the panel's determination.

The final NJDOL decision constitutes a final agency action appealable to the Superior Court, Appellate Division, pursuant to the *Rules Governing the Courts of the State of New Jersey*, R. 2:2-3.

Program Revocation

Before the NJDOL revokes a provider's training program, the provider shall have the opportunity for a contested case hearing, pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act, N.J.S.A. 52:14B-1 et seq., and 52:14F-1 et seq., and the Uniform Administrative Procedure Rules, N.J.A.C. 1:1. The provider shall submit its request for a hearing to TrainingEvaluationUnit@dol.nj.gov within 15 business days of receiving notice from the NJDOL of the proposed action to remove a training program.

Modifications

Any substantial changes made to an eligible training program that impact Workforce Pell eligibility will require immediate notification and potential re-submission to the State.

Bilateral Agreements

Governors of two states are able to enter into a bilateral agreement for eligible workforce programs that enroll students located in partnering states. New Jersey will not be operating bilateral agreements with other states at the time of program launch. This approach reflects the need for the State to further review and assess the Workforce Pell frameworks in other states and ensure the best method for ensuring that other states' programs meet New Jersey's requirements. The State will continue to monitor and evaluate potential bilateral agreement partnerships with other states based on evaluation of finalized program components to ensure alignment with New Jersey's Workforce Pell program standards and workforce needs.

Program Eligibility Determination

The State leveraged its existing [Eligible Training Provider List](#) (ETPL) infrastructure for data collection and performance tracking. The ETPL serves as the State's official list of approved training providers and workforce programs eligible to receive State and federal workforce training funds. The ETPL provides benefits to training providers for participation, including access to WIOA tuition subsidies, broad exposure to state residents through the New Jersey Training Explorer, outcome measurement at no cost to them, and publication on the Credential Registry, an internationally recognized open, machine-readable, interoperable system for storing provider, program, and outcome data.

In March 2026, all Title IV-eligible institutions received notification about the Workforce Pell grant program and the State's initial data collection process and timeline for program eligibility. See Table 2 for details on the program and student data collection process. The State set an aggressive timeline for the pilot year of May 1, 2026, for registration and submission to the ETPL, focusing on programs that had collected the necessary data to meet program requirements. Technical support was provided through recorded webinars, presentations, meetings, and correspondence with Intelligrants (IGX) specialists and State staff. New Jersey utilizes IGX for the ETPL.

Table 2. Program and Student Data Collection Process

Step	Action	Description	Who
1a	Register Programs	Providers NOT in IGX: Created an account at njdol.intelligrants.com/IGXLogin and registered their short-term, non-degree programs. These providers were assigned a NJDOL specialist upon registration.	Institutions who are not yet in IGX

Step	Action	Description	Who
1b	Add Programs	Providers already in IGX: Reviewed their current listings and added any short-term, non-degree programs not yet in the system. Assigned NJDOL specialists assisted the institutions with this process.	Existing IGX institutions
2	Preliminary Review	NJDOL and OSHE reviewed program data against the structural eligibility criteria. Only programs that met Title IV eligibility, hour, and in-demand alignment criteria advanced to Steps 3 and 4.	NJDOL & OSHE
3	Program Survey	Completed a brief online survey with program-level information not captured in IGX (maturity, credential details, articulation, delivery mode). The survey link was sent only to institutions with programs meeting Title IV eligibility, hour, and in-demand alignment criteria.	Institutions with qualifying programs
4	Student Data	Providers that had not already transmitted student data were asked to securely transmit four quarters of student enrollment and completion data for the programs determined to be eligible in Steps 3 and 4 with SSNs (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025 cohort) via IGX upload or OSHE's MoveIT SFTP.	Institutions with qualifying programs

Upon receipt and verification of all necessary data, the State, in partnership with the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, conducted a thorough review to determine the eligibility of training programs satisfying Workforce Pell requirements. All providers with programs meeting Title IV-eligibility, hour, and in-demand alignment criteria received a determination letter from the State regarding the eligibility status of their programs. NJDOL and OSHE presented the implementation process and results of the final data analyses at the State Employment and Training Commission quarterly meeting to meet the statutory requirements for State Workforce Board consultation. Subsequently, the State, in partnership with the Governor, certified the programs. The full list of eligible programs — along with other information required under law — will be published on New Jersey's Workforce Pell web pages and then submitted to the federal government.

Timeline

Beginning in early fall 2025, NJDOL and OSHE convened the WPIWG and initiated regular meetings to lay the groundwork for the process outlined in this document. In early 2026 and extending into spring 2026, NJDOL and OSHE convened several meetings and established email contact with a Stakeholder Advisory Group comprising a cross-section of Title IV-eligible institutions and the New Jersey Council on County Colleges to gain input into eligibility

determinations, the State's public comment on proposed rules, policy development, and communications strategy. Marking the culmination of the program process, the State coordinated with the State Employment and Training Commission and the Governor to verify the final processes and determinations to ensure alignment.

Future Considerations

As part of the first year of implementation, the State recognizes that Workforce Pell processes will continue to evolve. Pilot policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated to support continuous improvement toward meeting the State's design principles, operational efficiency, and compliance with state and federal requirements. Additional guidance related to future cycles and timelines will be communicated as available.

Contact

Inquiries from training providers regarding New Jersey's Workforce Pell process for the pilot year can be directed to TrainingEvaluationUnit@dol.nj.gov. Emails must contain the words "Workforce Pell" in the subject line. Up-to-date State information on Workforce Pell can be found on the state website: [Workforce Pell](#).

Helpful Resources

The content provided in this section is intended to serve as a resource to help develop strategies to implement high-quality Workforce Pell programs with strong outcomes for students and is provided in good faith. The resources may not be comprehensive, and readers should take into account context for how these resources may be applied.

Federal Resources:

- Federal Register: [Workforce Pell Grant Final Rule](#)
- U.S. Department of Education Fact Sheet: [Trump Administration Implements Workforce Pell Grant Provisions of the Working Families Tax Cuts Act](#)
- U.S. Department of Education, Center for Occupational Research and Development: [Introduction to Stackable Credentials](#) and [Stackable Credentials Toolkit](#)

State Resources:

- New Jersey Workforce Pell: [Workforce Pell](#)
- IGX Registration: <https://njdol.intelligrants.com/IGXLogin>
- IGX Training Manual: [https://www.nj.gov/labor/assets/PDFs/ORI%20-%20IGX%20Provider%20Training%20Manual%20\(V.1\)%207-19-24.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/labor/assets/PDFs/ORI%20-%20IGX%20Provider%20Training%20Manual%20(V.1)%207-19-24.pdf)
- MyCareerNJ: <https://MyCareer.NJ.gov>

National Organization Resources:

- America Achieves: [Workforce Pell Resource Library](#)
- Education Strategy Group: [ESG Stackability Guide](#)
- National Governors Association: Workforce Pell: [An Overview for Governors](#)
- New America: Workforce Pell: [A State Playbook for Implementation](#)
- New Jersey Statewide Data System: [Noncredit Education in New Jersey: Definitions, Data Systems, and Workforce Pell Readiness](#)
- Workforce Pell Data Collaborative: [Building the Data Foundation for Workforce Pell](#)