Work Source MAINE | State Workforce Development Board

Workforce Pell Program Design Webinar

October 27, 2026

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Today’s Agenda

1. About Workforce Pell
2. Program Requirements
3. How to Apply
4. Program Approval Process
5. Questions

Workforce Pell

- Expands federal Pell Grant eligibility to approved short-term workforce training programs that prepare students for high-skill, high-wage, in-demand occupations.

- Effective July 20, 2026, the program was established under the Working Families Tax Cuts Act.

Guiding Principles & Goals

PRIMARY GOALS

- Align programs with high-skill, high-wage, in-demand occupational needs of Maine (as defined by state's economic development priorities)
- Ensure quality outcomes
- Provide a transparent, consistent process for institutions and learners

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION

- Build on existing processes and policies to integrate within (e.g., HWID job list and MaineEARNS) vs. create entirely new, separate structure
- Use lessons learned from the initial eligibility review to provide guidance to help expand the pool of eligible programs next year

→ Maine Workforce Pell Program Determination Policy approved July 30 by the State Workforce Development Board

Federal Requirements

- To qualify, programs must first meet the basic standards under the federal statute. The program must have been in existence for at least one year (which means the eligible workforce program has met the required conditions for at least one year prior to approval).

Design Element 1

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

- The program must be offered by an accredited public, nonprofit, or for-profit entity eligible to participate in student aid programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act.
- An eligible institution may contract out no more than 25% of the program instruction to an ineligible provider. That flexibility is expanded to as much as 49% for the related technical instruction (RTI) of a Registered Apprenticeship program.

Design Element 2

LENGTH AND FORMAT

To qualify, programs:

- Must be at least 8 weeks but less than 15 weeks in length (150 – 599 clock hours in duration)
- Cannot be a correspondence course or part of a study abroad program
- Program design consideration: The program weeks do not need to be sequential.

Design Element 3

ALIGN WITH HIGH-SKILL, HIGH-WAGE, IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS

Path 1: High-skill, high-wage, in-demand occupations

Path 2: Essential, in-demand occupations

Registered Apprenticeship (RA)

The related instruction component of a RA, automatically satisfies the requirements for high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand.

Program Considerations

- Map your program's CIP code to the target SOC code with the CIP-SOC crosswalk
- Excluded: Occupations typically requiring a bachelor's degree or higher, or occupations typically accessible with only a high school diploma

Criteria for Identifying High-Skill, High-Wage or In-Demand Occupations

- An occupation may be designated as a WF Pell Priority Occupation if it meets all of the following baseline criteria:
- In-demand occupation with average annual openings exceeding 20
- Aligned with industry sector defined in state or local economic development priorities
- Minimum of 110% state minimum wage (to meet VAE threshold)
- Alignment of Workforce Pell training length and licensure/degree requirements
- In addition to meeting the baseline criteria, an occupation must meet one of the following conditions:

Path1: High-skill, high-wage, in-demand

- Minimum education requirement meets or exceed "Postsecondary non-degree award" or "HS diploma plus significant OJT"
- High-wage = median wage exceeds median wage of the state
- Aligned with one of the top three sectors in local workforce development areas

Path 2: Essential, in-demand occupations

Occupations that are essential to the operation of Maine's supporting **public infrastructure systems**—healthcare, childcare, housing, transportation, broadband and digital connectivity, and community-based services —and their role in enabling labor force participation and economic growth, even if the occupation does not meet "high-wage" or educational requirements.

Workforce Pell Priority Occupations

Meets Criteria 1: High-wage, High-skill, In-demand Occupations	
SOC Code	**Job Title**
47-2021	Brickmasons and Blockmasons
47-2031	Carpenters
51-9124	Coating, Painting, and Spraying Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders
15-1231	Computer Network Support Specialists
51-9161	Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Operators
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists
53-7021	Crane and Tower Operators
31-9091	Dental Assistants
47-2111	Electricians
51-9041	Extruding, Forming, Pressing, and Compacting Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders
512051	Fiberglass Laminators and Fabricators
29-2099	Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics
47-2132	Insulation Workers, Mechanical
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses
51-4041	Machinists
49-9043	Maintenance Workers, Machinery
173013	Mechanical Drafters
49-9044	Millwrights
51-9023	Mixing and Blending Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators
51-4072	Molding, Coremaking, and Casting Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic
519196	Paper Goods Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders
29-2043	Paramedics
47-2071	Paving, Surfacing, and Tamping Equipment Operators
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians
49-9096	Riggers
51-9012	Separating, Filtering, Clarifying, Precipitating, and Still Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders
47-2211	Sheet Metal Workers
47-2022	Stonemasons
47-2221	Structural Iron and Steel Workers
51-2041	Structural Metal Fabricators and Fitters
29-2055	Surgical Technologists
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers

Meets Criteria 2: Essential, In-demand Occupations	
SOC Code	**Job Title**
49-3011	Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists
53-3051	Bus Drivers, School
53-3052	Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity
53-5021	Captains, mates, and pilots of water vessels
39-9011	Childcare Workers
29-2010	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians
21-1094	Community Health Workers
47-4011	Construction and Building Inspectors
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians
47-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers
53-1047	Firstline Supervisors of Transportation & Material Moving Workers, Except Aircraft Cargo Handling Supervisor
47-4041	Hazardous Materials Removal Workers
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides
31-9092	Medical Assistants
31-1131	Nursing Assistants
49-9062	Medical Equipment Repairers
29-2072	Medical Records Specialists
29-2057	Ophthalmic Medical Technicians
29-2081	Opticians, Dispensing
49-3053	Outdoor Power Equipment and Other Small Engine Mechanics
39-9099	Personal Care and Service Workers, All Other
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians
31-9097	Phlebotomists
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education
29-2053	Psychiatric Technicians
49-2021	Radio, Cellular, and Tower Equipment Installers and Repairers
21-1093	Social and Human Service Assistants
21-1018	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary
49-2022	Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers, Except Line Installers
49-9052	Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers
51-8031	Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant and System Operators

Design Element 4

BRING EMPLOYERS TO THE TABLE

- Programs need to verify that their programs are designed to meet the hiring needs of employers.
- Consider including employers in your program design and review process.
- The application requires that programs submit an Employer Validation form to confirm that the competencies of the program meet the hiring needs of employers.

Employer Validation

Employer validation should primarily be provided through industry-led groups, such as:

- Industry associations
- Program advisory boards (e.g., community college or university)
- Other employer-led industry groups

These entities must represent employers that:

- Have current or projected hiring demand in the occupation(s) associated with the program; and
- Reflect the relevant regional or industry labor market served by the program.

If validation through an employer-led entity is not feasible, programs may instead provide validation from **a minimum of three Maine-based employers.**

Supporting evidence includes but is not limited to:

- **Industry-defined career pathways** with credential requirements published on Work Source Maine, or other industry-defined career pathway framework (documentation required)
- **Registered apprenticeship** schedule of work: Eligible RTI automatically satisfies requirements
- **Employer hiring standards** or published occupational qualification requirements
- **Competency or curriculum alignment** materials
- **Sector partnership, industry association or advisory board meeting minutes** reflecting employer participation and curriculum review

Design Element 5

STACKABILITY

- All programs must lead to a postsecondary recognized credential.
- Credentials may be determined to be stackable if there is evidence of alignment to additional credentials that can be accumulated over time to move individuals along an industry-defined career pathway or up a career ladder to different and potentially higher-paying jobs, unless the program prepares students for employment in an occupation for which there is only one recognized postsecondary credential.

Design Element 6

ARTICULATION TO CREDIT

- Workforce Pell-eligible programs must demonstrate that, upon completion of the program and enrollment in a related certificate or degree program, a student will receive academic credit toward at least one certificate or degree program at one or more eligible institutions.

Evidence of Stackability and Articulation to Credit

Evidence must be in place for at least 12 months.
Evidence includes, but is not limited to:

- Official transcripts or academic program documentation showing the award and application of credit,
- Articulation agreements
- Transfer-of-credit agreements
- Consortium or partnership agreements,
- Registered apprenticeship schedule of work
- Other similar formal arrangements

Program Design Consideration

Articulation agreements (or other form of evidence) must clearly specify the credits accepted and their applicability and be fully executed and in effect for a minimum of one year prior to the submission for program approval.

Design Element 7

PORTABILITY

- A postsecondary recognized credential is considered portable when it is recognized and accepted as verifying the qualifications of an individual in other settings. A credential may be determined to be portable if one or more of the following are documented:
  - Multi-employer recognition
  - Industry-recognized status
  - Labor market alignment
  - Transferability of competencies
  - Licensure or regulatory recognition

Design Element 8

EVIDENCE OF HIGH-QUALITY OUTCOMES

Program Design Consideration
Programs must submit evidence that the program met performance measures for at least 12 months prior to submitting application.

Measure	Definition	Timeline
Program completion	At least 70% finish within 150% of normal time to completion	2026+
Job placement	At least 70% employed in the 2nd quarter after exit	2026-2027 to 2028-2029
Job placement in occupation trained for	At least 70% employed in the 2nd quarter after exit in occupation trained for	Beginning in 2029 -2030
Value-added earnings	The difference between the adjusted median earnings of student completers, measured three years after exit, and 150 percent of the federal poverty level.	Beginning in 2030

Program Design Considerations

- Institutions should make sure to collect necessary data points early and consistently; this includes start and end dates of the course and student social security numbers which are used to calculate employment outcomes using administrative wage records. Review all participant data requirements in Step-by-Step Submission Guide.
- Program design should remain student-centered, and institutions should not make program design decisions that are not in the best interest of students.

Checklist for Program Eligibility

PROGRAM LENGTH:

Program meets Workforce Pell length requirements (8–14 weeks; 150–599 clock hours or equivalent)

STACKABLE, PORTABLE AND ARTICULATION TO CREDIT:

The credential is stackable (or leads to a sole recognized credential) and portable, and the program articulates to credit

PROGRAM HISTORY:

Program has been offered for at least one year prior to seeking approval

DELIVERY METHOD:

Program is not offered as correspondence, study abroad, or direct assessment

RECOGNIZED POST SECONDARY CREDENTIAL:

Program leads to a recognized postsecondary credential

TUITION AND FEES:

Costs are documented and monitored for future value-added earnings compliance

HIGH-SKILL, HIGH WAGE OR IN-DEMAND OCCUPATION

Program aligns with one of the occupations on Maine's Workforce Pell Priority Occupation List

OUTCOME TRACKING:

Track program completion data and collect the information needed for state reporting, including student Social Security numbers to support job placement and earnings analysis

Maine’s Workforce Pell Website

Overview for Title IV Institutions

- Program Eligibility Criteria
- How to Apply
- Application Review Timeline
- Approved Programs
- Technical Assistance & Resources

Read Maine's Workforce Pell Policy

Step-by-step submission guide

Questions? Contact us

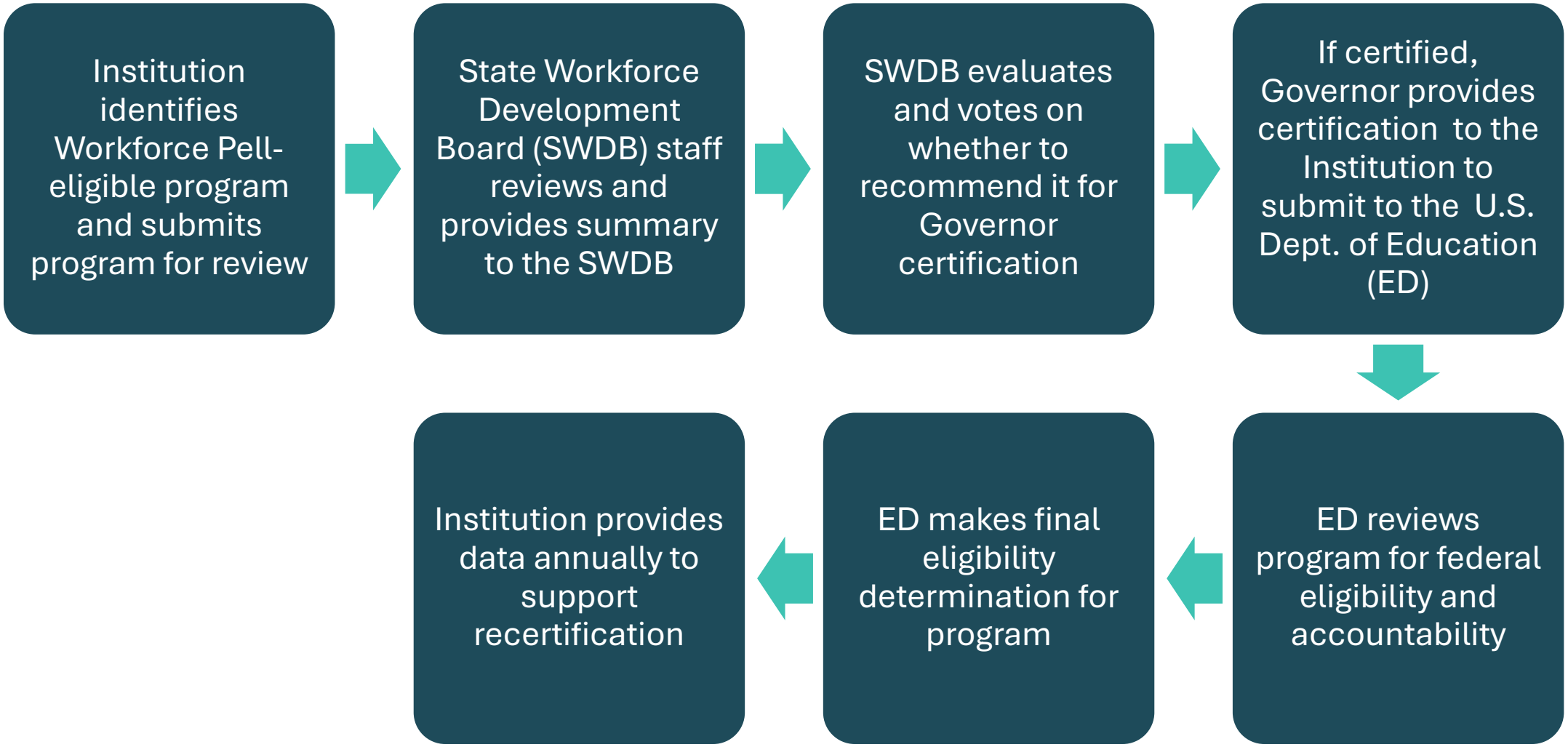
Apply for Workforce Pell Program Approval

Maine is now accepting applications from Title IV eligible postsecondary institutions

Workforce Pell Application

website: www.worksourcemaine.com/pages/workforce-pell

Program Review Process



Program Application Resource Links

- Maine's Workforce Pell Webpage
- Program Determination Policy
- Priority Occupation List
- Step-by-Step Submission Guide

Questions

Email
workforcepell.dol@maine.gov

Website
worksourcemaine.com/pages/workforce-pell