

Program Quality & Outcome Standards Under OBBB (Workforce Pell)

To be eligible for Workforce Pell funding under Section 2011 of the OBBB, short-term training programs must meet certain federal quality benchmarks.

Below is an in-depth guide for understanding each requirement, assessing your readiness, and identifying what to do if you're not there yet.



REQUIREMENT 1:

70% Completion and 70% Job Placement Rates

Why it matters

To qualify, your program must demonstrate a completion rate of at least 70% (within 150% of normal program time) and a job placement rate of at least 70% (within 180 days of completion). These rates are required to ensure that publicly funded short-term programs produce real, measurable outcomes.

How to check it

- Use internal student records or institutional research to calculate historical program completion rates.
- Work with your career services or alumni offices to determine how many graduates obtained employment within six months.
- Document the data used and methodology in case of audit or program review.

What if you're not there yet

- Conduct a barrier analysis to identify why students aren't completing (e.g., scheduling conflicts, lack of academic support, financial issues).
- Strengthen wraparound supports such as advising, tutoring, and transportation or childcare assistance.
- Establish employer partnerships that provide work-based learning, internships, or guaranteed interviews to improve job placement rates.
- Build in short-form credentials or stackable micro-pathways that offer immediate labor market value, even for partial completers.

Completion & Job Placement Rate Resources

- IPEDS Outcome Measures (NCES) [Outcome Measures \(OM\) survey component](#)
- [NACE First Destination Outcomes for College Graduates](#)



REQUIREMENT 2:

Earnings Must Exceed Program Cost + 150% of the Poverty Level

Why it matters

The Department of Education requires programs to demonstrate financial value to students. Specifically, median value-added earnings (three years after program completion) must exceed the median total price charged to students.

How to check it

- Identify the median total cost to students, including tuition, fees, books, and supplies.
- Estimate median post-completion earnings using labor market data, alumni surveys, or employer-reported data.
- Calculate value-added earnings by subtracting 150% of the federal poverty line from earnings, and compare that figure to program cost.

What if you're not there yet

- Adjust program pricing or identify new funding models to reduce out-of-pocket costs.
- Add industry-recognized certifications that improve immediate wage potential.
- Build employer sponsorships or tuition reimbursement pipelines.
- Incorporate wage negotiation or job readiness training into the curriculum.
- Use stackable models that build toward higher-wage occupations over time.

Earnings vs. Cost Resources

- Federal Poverty Guidelines (2025 – U.S. HHS) [economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines](#)
- O*NET Online (Wage Data by Occupation) [O*NET](#)

REQUIREMENT 3:

Alignment with In-Demand Careers and Employer Hiring Needs

Why it matters

Programs must be aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations. They must meet actual employer hiring requirements and lead to credentials that are portable and stackable, unless the occupation only requires a single recognized credential.

How to check it

- Match your program to a high-demand occupation listed by the U.S. Department of Labor or your state workforce board.
- Validate with employer partners that the credential meets hiring standards.
- Ensure your credential is part of a broader pathway or leads to licensure where appropriate.
- Review your state's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) and workforce development plan.

What if you're not there yet

- Convene an employer advisory group to ensure the curriculum aligns with real-world expectations.
- Work with your state workforce board to map program credentials to high-demand job codes.
- Adjust your program to integrate work-based learning, employer-aligned competencies, or a credential with broader labor market recognition.
- Pursue third-party or industry certification to strengthen credential value.

In-Demand Career & Job Alignment Resources

- [What's In Demand | CareerOneStop](#)
- [O*NET Code Connector / Job Matching O*NET](#)
- [State Workforce Boards / American Job Center Finder | CareerOneStop](#)

Know the rules. Shape your strategy.

Read the full policy: [Text - H.R.1 - 119th Congress \(2025-2026\): One Big Beautiful Bill Act](#) to see exactly how Workforce Pell eligibility is defined.

If you'd like help interpreting the requirements—or turning your self-check results into an action plan—we're here to walk you through it and get your programs ready to qualify.

