

FINANCIAL AID GUIDANCE MEMO

REFERENCE:	FA 25-014
TOPIC:	OHIO WORK READY GRANT (OWRG)
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RELEVANT STATUTE:	OHIO REVISED CODE, SECTION 3333.24

Overview

The Ohio Work Ready Grant (OWRG) provides funding to Ohio residents who demonstrate the highest levels of financial need as determined by the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#). Eligible students must be enrolled in a qualified program at an Ohio community, state community, or technical college, an Ohio technical center, or a state university branch campus.

Qualified Institutions and Programs

Institutions that are qualified for the OWRG include community, state community, or technical colleges, Ohio technical centers, and state university branch campuses. Students must also be enrolled in a qualified program which is defined as a credit or noncredit program that leads to an industry-recognized credential, certificate, or degree and prepares the student for a job that is identified as an “in-demand” or “critical” job as determined by the office of workforce transformation or is submitted by a community, state community, or technical college, an Ohio technical center, or a state university branch campus and will meet regional workforce needs, as approved by the chancellor.

These programs are defined by Classification of Instruction Program (CIP) codes that are consistent with the above qualifications. In the event there is a regional need for additional CIP codes to be added to the approved list, a petition can be sent to the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE).

Petitions must be completed by the deadline indicated on the form and, if approved, the additional CIP code(s) will be added to the approved list for the next fiscal year, unless otherwise noted. Submission of a petition is not a guarantee of approval. Students should not be awarded OWRG until the fiscal year in which the additional CIP is added. Please review the [Petition to Add to the Approved Regional CIP Code List](#) for further details.

CIP codes that are approved, along with the petition form, are found on the program website at <https://highered.ohio.gov/educators/financial-aid/sgs/owrg/work-ready>.

Student Eligibility

- OWRG recipients are required to be current Ohio residents as described in the Ohio Student Residency Administrative Rule, found at: <http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/3333-1-10/>.
- The student has registered for selective service as required by federal and state law, if applicable.

- Students must file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the year in which the grant is to be awarded and have received a Student Aid Index (SAI) or equivalent successor measurement of 3750 or less.
- Students must meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as determined by the institution.
- Students must be enrolled in a qualified program at a community, state community, or technical college, an Ohio technical center, or a state university branch campus.

Utilization

Students may receive an award for a maximum of six semesters or the equivalent of three academic years of study. Awards from the Ohio Work Ready Grant can be used for tuition, fees, and other educationally related expenses. Since this grant is not tuition and fee specific, students are able to receive a refund from their award to pay for books, supplies, living expenses, etc. provided that the award does not exceed the student's cost of attendance (COA).

Student Awards

Students can receive an award for either full-time or part-time enrollment and may receive an award for a maximum of six semesters or the equivalent of three academic years of full-time or part-time study.

Three tiers of awarding are available for students:

- Full-Time: Degree-seeking students enrolled in 12 or more credit hours per term OR a continuously enrolled student who enrolls in at least 30 credit hours in an academic year, regardless of the amount per term.
 - Full-Time students are eligible for up to \$3,000 per academic year.
- Part-Time: Degree-seeking students enrolled in 11 or fewer credit hours per term.
 - Part-Time students are eligible for up to \$2,000 per academic year.
- Short-Term: Students enrolled in a short-term certificate or industry-recognized credential program.
 - Short-Term students are eligible for up to \$2,000 per certificate or program.
 - Students who complete multiple short-term certificates or industry-recognized credential programs in an academic year are eligible to receive up to \$3,000 for the year, regardless of the number of programs completed in the academic year.

OWRG awards can be used for tuition, fees, and other educationally related expenses. Since this grant is not tuition and fee specific, students are able to receive a refund from their award to pay for books, supplies, living expenses, etc. provided that the award does not exceed the student's cost of attendance (COA). Institutions will be required to ensure awarded students meet all eligibility criteria before disbursing the grant to the student. Any application for this grant is solely the responsibility of the institution and must comply with eligibility and awarding requirements set forth in the institution's grant agreement.

Students may receive awards at multiple institutions during the same academic year. It is the awarding institution's responsibility to ensure that an over award is not processed. Institutions must determine the amount of OWRG funding the student has already received before awarding any additional funding so that award limits are not exceeded. A student may not receive more than \$3,000 in an academic year. No student shall be eligible to receive a grant for more than six semesters or the equivalent of three academic years.

Considering allocations are sent to institutions after the start of the fiscal year, for fiscal year 2025 funding, it is allowable to fund terms that started after July 1, 2024, for which a student was eligible. Students may only receive a

retroactive award if they are currently enrolled or have graduated within the fiscal year being awarded. Students who have withdrawn are ineligible for retroactive awarding.

FAFSA Verification

If a student is selected for verification of their FAFSA and the determination is made that the student is no longer eligible for OWRG due to verification, any OWRG funds applied to the student account for that academic year must be removed from the student's aid package. Conversely, if a student completes verification late and is found to be eligible for OWRG, an award may be added to the student's aid package if funds remain available from the grant allocation.

Reporting Requirements

Reporting is required on a quarterly and annual basis to ensure grant funds are being utilized properly and to determine allocation amounts for subsequent years.

Quarterly, institutions shall submit an expenditure report to ODHE which will include the total funds utilized to date. The reporting periods, due dates, and reporting template can be found on our website under **Reporting** at <https://highered.ohio.gov/educators/financial-aid/sgs/owrg/work-ready>.

For annual reporting, a reporting tool has been provided by ODHE, and additional information will be included in each institution's grant agreement. The Higher Education Information (HEI) System houses the reporting tool for OWRG annual reporting. Detailed instructions, file format, and the file template can be found here: <https://highered.ohio.gov/data-reports/hei-system/hei-file-doc/hei-financial-aid/owrg>.

HEI System Access

The HEI system can be found at: <https://hei.ohiohighered.org>. An institution's financial aid liaison is responsible for granting access to individuals on their campus. Please see the HEI Authorization Manual for detailed instructions. The Manual and a webinar demonstrating the HEI system can be found here: <https://highered.ohio.gov/data-reports/hei-system/hei-data-submission/new-hei-fags-finaid>.

Selective Service

Ohio Revised Code (ORC) section 3345.32 still requires compliance with the selective service law for a student to be eligible for any of Ohio's state grants and scholarships, subsidy, and in-state tuition. ORC 3345.32 Student Noncompliance with Selective Service can be found here: <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section3345.32>.

As such, ODHE still requires that students comply with selective service registration before funds are requested for the term, and documentation maintained as part of the audit process. If a student falls into one of the exceptions according to ORC for selective service, the documentation for this exception must be provided to ODHE in the case of an audit. For birthdays that fall after the FAFSA filing and before a term start date, an institution is required to check registration prior to requesting any state aid for a term after the 18th birthday.

If Ohio legislation is changed, ODHE will inform the campuses.

Financial Aid Audits

The Ohio Revised Code authorizes the Chancellor to conduct financial aid audits of state-supported colleges and universities, proprietary, and non-profit private colleges, and universities. All Ohio institutions with financial aid errors based on their prior year audit results will automatically be audited in an upcoming calendar year. Additional

institutions may be audited by random selection to maintain our goal of auditing a set number of institutions yearly. Every institution will be audited *at least* once every three years.

Please direct any questions to Barbara Hammer, Program Manager, (614) 466-0551, OWRG@highered.ohio.gov.