

FINANCIAL AID GUIDANCE MEMO

REFERENCE: **FA 26-018**
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 financial need as determined by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and who are enrolled in an academic program leading to employment in one of Ohio's critical or in-demand occupations. 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 technician-aligned programs leading to careers in advanced manufacturing and/or engineering technology are given priority for OWRG funding. Students in these programs ONLY do not need to demonstrate financial need (i.e.: they do not need to have a Pell-eligible SAI), however they must file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the year in which the grant is to be awarded to receive funding.

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.

The subject areas are determined by the CIP Code associated with the student's enrollment. Eligible CIP codes may periodically change, and the most up-to-date list of codes can be found in the [Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, here](#). The spreadsheet contains three tabs: 1. CIP Codes for Technician-Aligned CIPs, 2. CIP codes for Other Qualified Programs (Statewide), 3. CIP Codes for Approved Regional Additions.

Qualified Technician-Aligned programs leading to careers in advanced manufacturing and/or engineering technology are given priority for OWRG funding. Students in these programs do not need to demonstrate financial need (i.e.: they do not need to have a Pell-eligible SAI), and maximum awards are increased for students in these programs.

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. *Note: The CIP Code list for Technician-Aligned Programs will not be modified by a regional need petition.*

Qualified Program CIP codes, Approved Regional CIP codes, CIP codes for Technician-Aligned Programs, and the petition form are available 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 must have a Pell eligible SAI.
 - **NOTE:** Students enrolled in programs leading to careers in advanced manufacturing and/or engineering technology need to complete a FAFSA but do not need to demonstrate financial need (i.e.: they do not need to have a Pell-eligible SAI).
- 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.

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.

For purposes of OWRG full-time and part-time are defined as follows:

- Full-time student means a degree-seeking student enrolled in 12 or more credit hours per term OR a continuously enrolled student who enrolls in at least thirty credit hours in an academic year regardless of amount per term.
- Three-quarters-time student means a degree-seeking student enrolled in 9 - 11 credit hours per term.
- Half-time student means a degree-seeking student enrolled in 6 - 8 credit hours per term.
- Quarter-time student means a degree-seeking student enrolled in 1 - 5 credit hours per term.
- Short-Term: Students enrolled in a short-term certificate or industry-recognized credential program.

For students enrolled in an advanced manufacturing or engineering technology program of instruction , the maximum yearly award amount is:

- \$6,000 per academic year for full-time degree-seeking students.
 - \$4,500 per academic year for three-quarters-time degree-seeking students.
 - \$3,000 per academic year for half-time degree-seeking students.
 - \$1,500 per academic year for quarter-time degree-seeking students.
 - \$3,000 per program for students enrolled in a short-term certificate or industry recognized credential program
- NOTE:** a student who completes multiple short-term certificates and/or industry recognized credential programs in an academic year is eligible to receive up to \$4,000 total for the year, regardless of the number of programs completed in the academic year.

OWRG funding for students enrolled in an advanced manufacturing or engineering technology program of instruction may not exceed \$3,000/academic term for up to 6 academic terms.

For students enrolled in all other qualified programs of study (CIP code list is available [HERE](#)), the maximum yearly award amount is:

- \$3,000 per academic year for full-time degree-seeking students.
 - \$2,250 per academic year for three-quarters-time degree-seeking students.
 - \$1,500 per academic year for half-time degree-seeking students.
 - \$750 per academic year for quarter-time degree-seeking students.
 - \$1,500 per program for students enrolled in a short-term certificate or industry recognized credential program
- NOTE:** a student who completes multiple short-term certificates and/or industry recognized credential programs in an academic year is eligible to receive up to \$2,000 total for the year, regardless of the number of programs completed in the academic year.

OWRG funding for students enrolled in a qualified program of instruction not included in the list of advanced manufacturing or engineering technology programs may not exceed \$1,500/academic term for up to 6 academic terms.

Utilization

Students may receive an award for a maximum of six semesters or the equivalent of three academic years of study. Awards from OWRG can be used for tuition, fees, and other educationally related expenses, up to the student's cost of attendance (COA), and are refundable to the student, if applicable

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 \$6,000 (for students enrolled in qualified advanced manufacturing and engineering technology programs) or \$3,000 (for students enrolled in all other qualified programs) 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 2026 funding, it is allowable to provide a retroactive award for terms that started on or after July 1, 2025, 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. The exception to this are students enrolled in technician-aligned programs leading to careers in advanced manufacturing and/or engineering technology, as they need to complete a FAFSA but do not need to demonstrate financial need.

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 report to ODHE the total funds utilized to date. Annually, institutions shall report to ODHE additional student specific information as included in each institution's grant agreement. The Higher Education Information (HEI) System houses the reporting tool for both the OWRG quarterly and annual reporting. Detailed instructions, reporting periods, due dates, file format, and the file templates can be found here:

<https://highered.ohio.gov/data-reports/hei-system/hei-file-doc/hei-financial-aid/owrg>.

Marketing Plan Requirement

Participating postsecondary institutions are required to prepare a brief marketing plan indicating how the institution plans to utilize OWRG funds for recruiting and retaining students in programs leading to in-demand occupations.

ODHE strongly recommends that each qualifying postsecondary institution convene appropriate stakeholders (e.g.: enrollment management personnel, financial aid staff, faculty in qualifying programs, senior leadership) to establish a plan to increase recruitment, retention and credential attainment in these programs. Please note that for students pursuing a degree or credential in a technical-aligned program, \$6,000/year (for full-time enrollment) is sufficient to cover full tuition and general fees at most qualifying institutions and any remainder (up to cost of attendance) can be refunded to the student. **Marketing plans must be submitted to ODHE by June 30, 2026.**

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, a webinar demonstrating the HEI system, and the HEI Authorization Form can be found here:

<https://highered.ohio.gov/data-reports/hei-system/hei-resources>.

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 the OWRG Program Manager, OWRG@highered.ohio.gov.