

STATE AND FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID FOR ADULT STUDENTS WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL CREDENTIAL

This document guides programs in connecting adult students with two major state and federal tuition-assistance programs: the Washington College Grant and the Federal Pell Grant. Both can be accessed through state and federally approved options for eligibility per the Ability to Benefit provision of the Higher Education Act (HEA). Students can be considered for the Washington College Grant and/or the Federal Pell Grant by completing one of two applications: 1) the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or 2) the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA). The FAFSA and the WASFA are both free applications for financial aid; however, the WASFA is specifically for students who are not eligible for federal aid but could be eligible for state financial aid. The applications open October 1 each year and students should try to complete their financial aid application as soon as possible after that date.

Washington Grant Ability to Benefit

The Washington Grant provides grants for students without a high school credential who test at a certain level, earn six college credits successfully, or are co-enrolled in I-BEST and Washington's High School Plus (HS+) program. WA Grant is one of the most generous financial aid programs in the country. The amount received depends on family size, income, and the cost of the program. For example, if a student's family of four makes \$73,000 or less, college or career training could be free!

Federal Pell Grant Ability to Benefit

Ability to Benefit under federal student aid includes Pell Grants for students co-enrolled in Title-IV eligible career pathway programs with an option to earn a high school credential. Students can demonstrate eligibility when they test at a certain level, earn six college credits successfully, or co-enroll in I-BEST and HS+. Ability to Benefit allows eligible students to pay not only for tuition, fees, and books, but other living expenses as well. This makes it more likely for students to attend full-time and complete college faster. The maximum Federal Pell Grant award is \$7,395 for the 2023-2024 award year and depends on a number of factors including expected family contribution, cost of attendance, and full-time or part-time status.

Criteria

Students must be at least 16 years old and co-enrolled in an eligible college program of study and a high school completion program at any of our 34 community and technical colleges in Washington state. Students under 19 must be formally released from high school before enrolling. Running Start and international students are funded differently and are not included in these programs.

See the table below for ways eligible students co-enrolled in college and high school completion programs can access both the Washington College Grant and the Federal Pell Grant through the Ability to Benefit provision. Full eligibility requirements are available using the resource links in this document.

| | Washington College Grant Ability to Benefit | Federal Pell Grant Ability to Benefit |
|---|--|--|
| Application | FAFSA or WASFA | FAFSA |
| ONE of the following three options: | | |
| Achieve a cut score on an approved test | Yes | Yes |
| Earn six college credits | Yes | Yes |
| Co-enroll in I-BEST and High School+ | Yes | Yes |

Resources

- [Approved tests and cut scores](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/11/09/2020-24795/list-of-approved-ability-to-benefit-atb-tests-and-passing-scores)
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/11/09/2020-24795/list-of-approved-ability-to-benefit-atb-tests-and-passing-scores>
- [Washington Grant](https://wsac.wa.gov/wcg)
<https://wsac.wa.gov/wcg>
- [Ability to Benefit](https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/student-services/ability-to-benefit.aspx)
<https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/student-services/ability-to-benefit.aspx>



[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Except where otherwise noted

CONTACT INFORMATION

Nicole Hopkins, Policy Associate
 Basic Education for Adults
 360-704-4368, nhopkins@sbctc.edu