



MAINE

Competitive Skills Scholarship

Investing in earning and learning

Program Introduction

Program Overview



The Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP) provides funding and support services for eligible Maine residents to pursue Associate and Bachelor degree programs or employer recognized credentials leading to high-wage, in-demand jobs in Maine.

Background



- The **Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP)** was enacted to provide access to post-secondary education for Mainers at or below 200% of the poverty level to assist with the educational costs that will allow them to work in well-paid, high-demand occupations.
- CSSP received wide support from business groups and worker advocates and was signed into law in June 2007.
- CSSP is funded by a small percentage of an Employer's contributions to the Unemployment Insurance Competitive Skills Scholarship Fund

Basic Eligibility



You may qualify for CSSP if you:

- Are at least 18 years old or have graduated from high school and live in Maine
- Are seeking education or training for a job in a high wage, in-demand occupation
- Don't already have a marketable post-secondary degree or industry recognized credential

A degree or credential is considered unmarketable if:

- The credential earned is no longer able to be performed due to physical or mental health limitations
 - The applicant can show that the credential was received over 20 years ago and was intended to prepare the individual for a specific occupation which they have not worked in for the last 15 years
 - The degree, credential or license was obtained in another country or jurisdiction and is not recognized by the appropriate licensing body as a marketable degree in Maine
 - The applicant can show that the credential does not prepare them to obtain employment in their labor market area earning at least the CSSP median wage listed on the current CSSP High-Wage In-Demand (HWID) list. The CSSP HWID list, including the CSSP median wage can be found on the CSSP website.
- Have household income of less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level
 - Possess the ability to undertake & complete the education or training program

Occupation Criteria



- Your training must lead to a career in a high-wage, in-demand occupation
- Your training must be on the state's approved provider list or must be accredited by a regional/national accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education
- The training institution must offer degrees, licenses or industry recognized certifications OR similar credentials that are universally recognized

4-Week Income Guidelines



Four-Week Maximum (2025)

Household Size	4-Week Income Max
1	\$2,408
2	\$3,254
3	\$4,100
4	\$4,946
5	\$5,792
6	\$6,638
7	\$7,485
8	\$8,331
9	\$9,177
10	\$10,023

**based on Federal Poverty Level (FPL)*

Annual Income Guidelines



Annual Maximum (2025)

Household Size	200% or less*
1	\$31,300
2	\$42,300
3	\$53,300
4	\$64,300
5	\$75,300
6	\$86,300
7	\$97,300

**based on Federal Poverty Level (FPL)*

Household Size	200%* hourly wage**
1	\$15.05
2	\$20.34
3	\$25.63
4	\$30.91
5	\$36.20
6	\$41.49
7	\$46.78

***based on 40 hours per week*

Participant Responsibilities



- Demonstrate satisfactory progress in your educational training program
- Participate in year-round training as classes are available
- Mandatory monthly contact with Case Manager to share progress
- Submit grades to case manager at the end of each semester
- Provide a copy of Diploma/Certification/Proof of Licensure upon completion of training along with any employment details

Financial Information



- CSSP Participants must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application and release aid information to their CSSP Case Manager
- CSSP funds are available **only after all other federal, state and campus-based sources of financial aid have been considered** (does not include student loans)
- CSSP pays for required (as opposed to recommended) books, fees, supplies, tools, equipment, and uniforms
- CSSP participants must submit documentation such as grades, financial aid award letter, class schedule and required book list to their Case Manager every semester

Support Services



You may be eligible for:

- Tuition payments based on unmet need after applying all “free monies”
- Computer purchase or upgrade
- Transportation to and from classroom training. (Must exceed 10 miles one-way)
 - Mileage (\$.54 per mile – max of 350 miles per week)
 - Auto Repairs up to \$1,000 annually
- Required books, supplies, tools, uniforms, etc.
- Other Necessary Service or Need-may include eye or dental care
 - (up to \$1,000 per year and no more than \$2,000 for the entire enrollment)
- Childcare

Maximum Benefits



- Maximum benefits per year, per participant
 - \$10,000 per year – full time student
 - \$5,000 per year – half time student
- Maximum time to complete training; 6 years for Bachelors' degree; 3 years for Associates degree; 18-months for a one-year diploma or certificate program.
- Maximum of up to 1 year of funding support for developmental studies in preparation for approved training.
- After training goal is completed, up to \$1,000 for travel to and from interviews, eyecare required for employment, dental and relocation assistance (please be aware, this amount is included in the \$10,000 maximum)

Training Stipend



You may be eligible if:

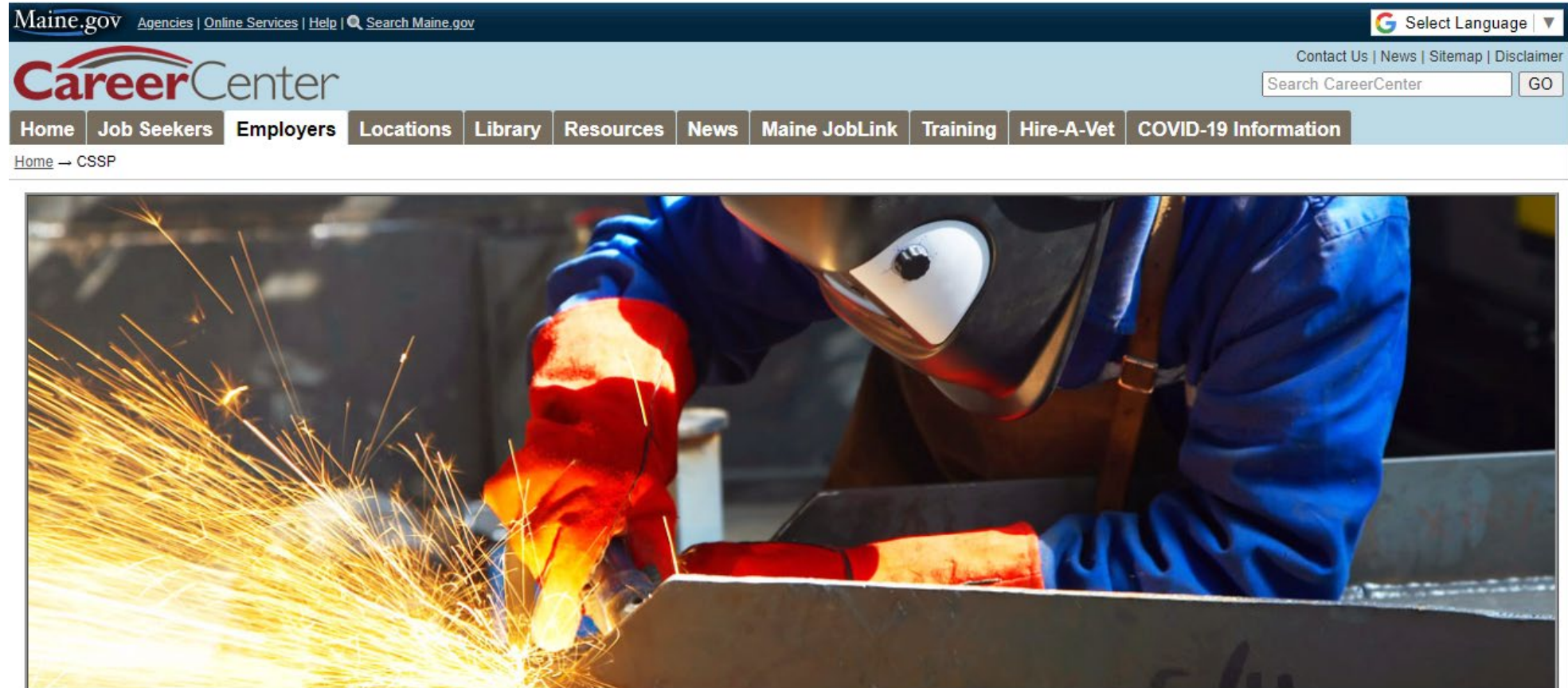
- You are a full-time student
- You have ongoing room and board expenses
- You are not living in a dorm on campus, a residential healthcare facility, a correctional facility, or a homeless shelter
- Your household income is 175% of poverty level or less

Requirements:

- Verification of last four (4) weeks of income
- Stipend eligibility reviewed every school term, or no less than every six months, or any time household income changes bring income above or below 175% of poverty level
- Monthly stipend currently \$902 per month (1/3 of maximum weekly Unemployment Insurance for full-time students)

Participants eligible for DWB, Unemployment Compensation, or TRA benefits are not eligible for the CSSP training stipend. Dependent children enrolled in CSSP are not eligible for the CSSP training stipend.

For more information, visit:
www.mainecareercenter.gov/cssp.shtml



Competitive Skills Scholarship Program

Program Referrals



As part of your enrollment, we may refer you to some of the following resources:

MaineCare

Maine Educational
Opportunity Center
(MEOC)

Food Supplement
(SNAP)

Temporary
Assistance for
Needy Families
(TANF)

Higher Opportunity
for Pathways to
Employment
(HOPE)

Workforce
Innovation and
Opportunity Act
(WIOA)

Dislocated Worker
Benefit (DWB)

Childcare

Financial Aid

Parents as Scholars

Additional Resources



- [Maine Adult Education](#)
- [Job Corps](#)
- [Maine Apprenticeship Program](#)
- [Senior Community Service Employment Program](#) (SCSEP)
- [Higher Opportunity for Pathways to Employment](#) (HOPE)
- [Maine's Parents as Scholars](#) (PaS)
- [Bureau of Rehabilitation Service](#)
 - (Vocational Rehabilitation; Division of Blind and Visually Impaired; Deaf, Hard of Hearing & Late Deafened)
- [Maine Veterans Services](#)
- [Workforce Solutions](#)
- [Eastern Maine Development Corporation](#) (EMDC)
- [Aroostook County Action Program](#) (ACAP)
- Maine Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC)

Questions



For questions concerning CSSP,
contact the Competitive Skills
Scholarship Program (CSSP) at:



CSSP.DOL@maine.gov

Telephone: 207-624-6400

CareerCenter Assistance



CareerCenters offer a variety of employment services at no charge. The CareerCenter's listed below provide resources for writing resumes or cover letters, can assist with your job search, and help you explore information about career paths and the skills required for specific occupations. Interactive workshops and hiring events are offered monthly and can be found at www.mainecareercenter.gov.

Call the CareerCenter Hotline 1-207-623-7981 or e-mail your local CareerCenter:



Augusta Area:	augusta.careercenter@maine.gov
Bangor Area:	bangor.careercenter@maine.gov
Brunswick Area:	brunswick.careercenter@maine.gov
Calais Area:	calais.careercenter@maine.gov
Hinckley Area:	nkv.careercenter@maine.gov
Lewiston Area:	lewiston.careercenter@maine.gov
Machias Area:	machias.careercenter@maine.gov
Greater Portland:	portland.careercenter@maine.gov
Presque Isle Area:	presqueisle.careercenter@maine.gov
Rockland Area:	rockland.careercenter@maine.gov
Springvale (York County):	springvale.careercenter@maine.gov
Wilton Area:	wilton.careercenter@maine.gov