
Sources of Education, Training, and Financial Aid

Education can open doors for those looking to start a new career or change specialty within their current occupation. This section outlines some major sources of education and training required to enter many occupations, as well as some ways to finance the education or training.

For information on the specific training and educational requirements for a particular occupation, and what training is typically provided by an employer, consult the Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement section of the appropriate *Handbook* statement.

Sources of Education and Training

Four-year colleges and universities. These institutions provide detailed information on theory and practice for a wide variety of subjects. Colleges and universities can provide one with the knowledge and background necessary to be successful in many fields. They also can help to place students in cooperative education programs—often called “co-ops”—or internships. Co-ops and internships are short-term jobs with firms related to one’s field of study that lead to college credit. In co-ops and internships, students learn the specifics of a job while making valuable contacts that can lead to a permanent position.

For more information on colleges and universities, go to your local library, consult your high school guidance counselor, or contact individual colleges. Also check with your State’s higher education agency. A list of these agencies is available on the Internet: <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD>.

Junior and community colleges. Junior and community colleges offer a mixture of programs that lead to associate degrees and training certificates. Community colleges tend to be less expensive than 4-year colleges and universities. They typically are more willing to accommodate part-time students, and their programs are more tailored to the needs of local employers. Many have an open admissions policy, and often these institutions offer weekend and night classes.

Many community colleges form partnerships with local businesses that allow students to gain job-specific training. For students who may not be able to enroll in a college or university because of their academic record, limited finances, or distance from such an institution, junior or community colleges are often used as a place to earn credits that can be applied toward a degree at a 4-year college. Junior and community colleges also are noted for their extensive role in continuing and adult education.

For more information on junior and community colleges, go to your local library, consult your high school guidance counselor, or contact individual schools. Also check with your State’s higher education agency. A list of these agencies is available on the Internet: <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD>.

Vocational and trade schools. These institutions train people in specific trades. They offer courses designed to provide hands-on experience. Vocational and trade schools tend to concentrate on trades, services, and other types of skilled work.

Vocational and trade schools frequently engage students in real-world projects, allowing them to apply field methods while learning theory in classrooms. Graduates of vocational and trade schools have an advantage over informally trained or self-trained job seekers because graduates have an independent organization certifying that they have the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the duties of a particular occupation. These schools also help students to acquire any license or other credentials needed to enter the job market.

For more information on vocational and trade schools, go to your local library, consult your high school guidance counselor, or contact individual schools. Also check with your State’s director of vocational-technical education. A list of State directors of vocational-technical education is available on the Internet: <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD>.

Apprenticeships. An apprenticeship provides work experience as well as education and training for those entering certain occupations. Apprenticeships are offered by sponsors, who employ and train the apprentice. The apprentice follows a training course under close supervision and receives some formal education to learn the theory related to the job.

Apprenticeships are a way for inexperienced people to become skilled workers. Apprenticeships are an agreement between the apprentice and the sponsor and generally last between 1 and 4 years. Some apprenticeships allow the apprentice to earn an associate degree. An *Apprenticeship Completion Certificate* is granted to those completing programs. This certificate is administered by federally approved State agencies.

Information on apprenticeships is available from the Office of Apprenticeship Training, Employer, and Labor Services on the Internet: http://www.doleta.gov/atels_bat. For assistance finding an apprenticeship program, go to: http://www.doleta.gov/atels_bat/fndprgm.cfm.

Professional societies, trade associations, and labor unions. These groups are made up of people with common interests, usually in related occupations or industries. The groups frequently are able to provide training, access to training through their affiliates, or information on acceptable sources of training for their field. If licensing or certification is required, they also may be able to assist you in meeting those requirements.

For a listing of professional societies, trade associations, and labor unions related to an occupation, check the Sources of Additional Information section at the end of that occupational statement in the *Handbook*.

Employers. Many employers provide on-the-job training. On-the-job training can range from spending a few minutes watching another employee demonstrate a task to participating in formal training programs that may last for several months. In some jobs, employees may continually undergo training to stay up to date with new developments and technologies, or to add new skills.

Military. The United States Armed Forces trains and employs people in more than 4,100 different occupations. For more information, see the *Handbook* statement on “Job Opportunities in The Armed Forces.” For detailed answers to specific questions, contact your local recruiting office. Valuable resources also are available on the Internet: <http://www.todaysmilitary.com>.

Sources of Financial Aid

Many people fund their education or training through financial aid or tuition assistance programs. Federal student aid comes in three forms—grants, work-study programs, and loans. All Federal student aid applicants must first fill out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which provides a Student Aid Report (SAR) and eligibility rating. Forms must be submitted to desired institutions of study, which determine the amount of aid you will receive.

For information on applying for Federal financial aid, visit the FAFSA Internet site: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>.

A U.S. Department of Education publication describing Federal financial aid programs, called *The Student Guide*, is available at: http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html.

Information on Federal programs is available from: <http://www.studentaid.ed.gov> and www.students.gov.

Information on State programs is available from your State’s higher education agency. A list of these agencies is available at: <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD>.

Grants. A grant is money which is given to a student or the institution they are attending in order to pay for their education or training and any associated expenses. Grants are typically given on the basis of financial need. Grants are considered gifts and are not paid back. Federal grants are almost exclusively for undergraduate students. They include Pell Grants, which can be worth up to \$4,050 annually, and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG), which can be worth up to \$4,000 annually. Priority for FSEOG awards is given to those who have also received the Pell Grant and have exceptional financial need.

Additional information on grants is available on the Internet: <http://www.studentaid.ed.gov>.

Information also is available from your State Higher Education agency. A list of these agencies is available at: <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD>.

Federal Work-Study program. The Federal Work-Study program is offered at most institutions and consists of Federal sponsorship of a student who works part time at the institution he or she is attending. The money a student earns through this program goes directly toward the cost of attending the institution. There are no set minimum or maximum amounts for this type of aid, although, on average, a student can expect to earn about \$2,000 per school year.

For additional information on work-study opportunities offered, check with individual institutions. General information on the Federal Work-Study program is available at: http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/2005-2006/english/types-fed-workstudy.htm.

Scholarships. A scholarship is a sum of money donated to a student to help pay for his or her education or training and any associated costs. Scholarships can range from small amounts up to the full cost of schooling. They are based on financial need, academic merit, athletic ability, or a wide variety of other criteria set by the organizations that provide the scholarships. Frequently, students must meet minimum academic requirements to be considered for a scholarship. Other qualifying requirements—such as intended major field of study, heritage, or group membership—may be added by the organization providing the scholarship.

Scholarships can be provided by a wide variety of institutions, including educational institutions, State and local governments, private associations, social groups, and individuals. There are no federally awarded scholarships based on academic merit. Most large scholarships are awarded to students by the institution they plan to attend. Students who have received State scholarships and plan to attend a school in another State should check with their State to see if the scholarship can be transferred.

Information on scholarships is typically available from high school guidance counselors and local libraries. Additional scholarship information is available from State higher education agencies. A list of these agencies is available at: <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD>. The College Board has information on available scholarships at: <http://www.collegeboard.com/pay>.

Student loans. Many institutions, both public and private, provide low-interest loans to students and their parents or guardians. The Federal Government also provides several types of student loans based on the applicant’s level of financial need. The amount of money a student can receive in loans varies by the distributing institution and depends on whether the student is claimed by a parent or guardian as a dependent. Since the process of applying for a loan may take several months, it is a good idea to start applying for Federal student loans well in advance.

The available Federal loan programs can accommodate prospective undergraduate, graduate, vocational, and disabled students. Federal loans can be distributed through the school that the student is attending, from the Federal Government directly, or from a third-party private lender or bank. Perkins loans are distributed through the school the student is attending. Loans coming from the Federal Government directly from the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program are dispersed by the Department of Education. Third-party loans through a private lender or bank are from the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) program. For all federally funded loans, payments are made to the institution that originally dispersed the funds.

For those with financial need, Federal Perkins loans and both Direct and FFEL-subsidized Stafford loans are available. Perkins loans have no minimum amount, but they are capped at \$4,000 per year for undergraduates and \$6,000 per year for graduate students. Subsidized Stafford loans can range in value from \$2,625 to \$8,500 per year and can increase as a student completes more years of undergraduate, graduate, or professional education. Interest rates remain at a flat 5 percent for all Perkins loans, while rates can fluctuate up to 8.25 percent for subsidized Stafford loans. Those with Perkins loans are not responsible for starting to repay the loan until they have been out of school for 9 months. Those with subsidized Stafford loans must begin payments within 6 to 9 months of leaving school but are not charged monthly interest while in school.

For those who do not demonstrate financial need, Direct and FFEL-unsubsidized Stafford Loans and Federal Parent Loans for Students (PLUS) are available. Unsubsidized Stafford loans can range in value from \$2,625 to \$18,500 per year. PLUS loans are capped at the cost of attendance. With Federal unsubsidized Stafford Loans, interest payments start almost immediately and can be paid monthly or accrued until the completion of studies. The latter option results in a larger total loan cost but may be more convenient for some students. With PLUS loans, the parent must pay interest and principal payments while the student is enrolled in school and must continue payments after completion. Check with your lender for available repayment schedules. Typically, students have 10 years to repay Perkins loans and from 10 to 30 years for unsubsidized Stafford loans.

Subsidized and unsubsidized Stafford loans are only available to students who are enrolled in an academic program at least half time. As with any loan, be sure to investigate different lenders, and understand what your loan contract requires of you before agreeing to any loan. Check with established financial institutions to compare the terms of available private student loans.

Comparisons of the various types of loans are available on the Internet: http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html.

The College Board has information on available loans at: <http://www.collegeboard.com/pay>.

Employer tuition support programs. Some employers offer tuition assistance programs as part of their employee benefits package. The terms of these programs depend on the firm and can vary by the type and amount of training subsidized, as well as by eligibility requirements. Consult your human resources department for information on tuition support programs offered by your employer.

Military tuition support programs. The United States Armed Forces offer various tuition assistance and loan repayment programs for military personnel. See the *Handbook* statement on “Job Opportunities in the Armed Forces” for more information. Also go to: <http://www.todaysmilitary.com/app/tm/get/collegethelp/support>.