



2025-2026

COUNSELOR PLAYBOOK

FIND YOUR THING

Dear College and Career Counselor,

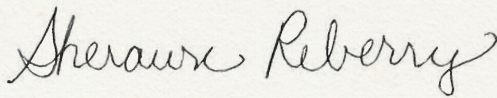
As another school year begins, I want to pause and thank you — truly — for the heart, dedication, and energy you pour into your students every single day. You are often the guide, the encourager, and the connector to life-changing opportunities, and we see the impact of your work across every corner of Idaho.

It's with deep appreciation and continued excitement that we share this year's updated Idaho Counselor Playbook. This resource was thoughtfully created with you in mind — to provide clear, accessible, and practical support as you help students and families explore their next steps. From training materials to current resources, everything here is designed to be easy to use and ready to share.

Our team has worked hard to ensure that the information reflects the evolving landscape of education, training, and workforce needs in our state. We hope this Playbook helps you empower students to make informed decisions — and inspires them to imagine the many possibilities that lie ahead.

Thank you for being a champion for Idaho's future. Together, we are building a stronger workforce and opening doors for the next generation to thrive right here at home.


With sincere gratitude,



Sherawn Reberry

Education & Careers Director, Idaho LAUNCH





THANKS TO THE SUPPORT FROM ADVISORS LIKE YOU.

Data shows that Idaho LAUNCH has helped raise the go-on rate by 3 percentage points.

1,260

Non-traditional
programs eligible
for LAUNCH

+18%

Enrolled in
community colleges*

+15.2%

Uptick in career &
technical enrollment

* Percent change in 2024 LAUNCH awardee data compared to 2023.

INFO FOR COUNSELORS

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how does
this work?



WHAT'S NEXT?!

FIND YOUR THING

Ready for that big-time ask?

“What will I do with my life?” It’s not an easy question to answer. That’s why we created Next Steps Idaho, and this guide. We help you connect students to what’s possible — and explore the many educational and career opportunities out there. We even cover how to pay for them.

Inside, find resources for counselors, educators, and mentors like you — plus some how-to-nail-it tips for high school — including a quarter-by-quarter calendar with professional development ideas, monthly focus tasks, and important dates.

The Latest for Educators

This is your landing place for the latest in college and career readiness resources, programs, and exploration tools. Find lesson plans, curriculum, and professional development training.

nextsteps.idaho.gov/educator



FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS:

Advanced Opportunities

Advanced Opportunities gives students in grades 7-12 a jump start on their future with funds that can help pay for overload courses, dual credits, exams, workforce training, or early graduation.

nextsteps.idaho.gov/resources/ao

FOR SOON-TO-BE GRADS:

Now open to high school seniors, Idaho LAUNCH is a grant program that helps students find their way to in-demand careers by helping cover the cost of an Idaho university, community college, career technical, or workforce training program.

nextsteps.idaho.gov/launch

Scholarship Idaho: The central place to apply for state-managed scholarships like Idaho LAUNCH.

scholarships.idaho.gov

FOR THE COLLEGE BOUND:

Apply Idaho

This is Idaho's free college application for up to 10 Idaho institutions. Students can select their Idaho Campus Choice schools and others.

apply.nextsteps.gov

Tips for Hosting an Event at Your School

High School Counselors and College & Career Advisors are often encouraged to organize multiple school events throughout the school year, such as parent nights, back-to-school nights, in-class presentations, College Fairs, and College Application Week. It can sometimes be challenging to know where to begin.

Here are some best practices for hosting successful events:

Preparing for the Event

Consider the event format and choose the appropriate date(s)

- Take into account the number of days required to engage all parties, including seniors and parents
- Check whether there are any conflicting events such as assemblies, PSAT testing, or field trips

Inform and involve school staff

- Advertise the event at an all-school staff meeting
- Send a “heads-up” email to all staff
- Work with Admin to ensure support

Recruit your team

- Form a committee (for a large event)
- Who can help you? TRIO representatives, IACRAO members, or admissions counselors
- Invite state representatives from LAUNCH, the OSBE Regional Outreach Coordinators, Career Technical Education representatives, or Advanced Opportunities

Communicate, communicate, communicate!

- Parents and Students
 - » What is the purpose of the event?
 - » Where is it?
 - » How can they prepare?
- Teachers and Staff
 - » Why is the event important?
 - » How will it impact them?

After the Event

Share your success!

- How many students applied for technical schools or other training providers?
- How many students applied during College App Week?
- How many students attended your FAFSA Night?
- How many applied for the Idaho LAUNCH grant?

Seek constructive feedback from students, parents, teachers, and others involved to gather valuable insight.

College & Career Advising Calendar: Q1

Check out the latest professional development events and find opportunities for students by visiting the Next Steps Idaho Calendar at nextsteps.idaho.gov/calendar

School Events Overview

Plan ahead for the different school events that you may want to host or participate in providing information for attendees.

- Back-to-School Night
- Parent Night
- Financial Aid Info Night
- College Application Week Events
- College Fair Night

Outreach Goals

Create outreach goals for yourself in order to inform your community about the happenings!

- Connect with your Regional Idaho LAUNCH/Next Steps Idaho Ambassador.
- Send reminder emails to teachers, staff, parents, and students regarding upcoming school events and dates.
- Visit: nextsteps.idaho.gov/media-kit for templates and materials.



Professional Development



Community of Practice
Experts, experienced, open forum, brainstorming



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Spotlight
Focused, in-depth training and Ed Forums

AUGUST

08

Professional Development

- Spotlight: State Programs: LAUNCH & Idaho Opportunity
- Spotlight: NSI Updates & Summer Enhancements
- Spotlight: Idaho College Month and Apply Idaho Challenge

Monthly Focus Tasks

- Write Welcome Letter to families and teachers explaining role
- Staff meeting presentations
 - Role
 - Idaho LAUNCH
 - Next Steps Idaho
- Review and submit Advanced Opportunities summer funding
- Check Basecamp
- Update school profile and website
- Reach out to your Regional Idaho LAUNCH and Next Steps Idaho Ambassador
- Schedule and prep for Back-to-School Night and Parent Night

SEPTEMBER

09

Professional Development

- Spotlight: Advanced Opportunities (for AO Coordinators)
- Spotlight: Idaho LAUNCH
- Spotlight: Apply Idaho and Idaho Campus Choice
- State Programs: LAUNCH & Advanced Opportunities
- Onboarding Students and Bundles
- Scholarship Idaho Overview
- Community of Practice: Counselor Day Events (IACRAO)
- Community of Practice: How to Host a College Application Week Event
- Skill Building: GEAR UP: Speaker Lab – Delivering Effective Lessons
- Spotlight: Apply Idaho Walk Thru
- Check early grads and their AO status

Monthly Focus Tasks

- Update all graduation checks for seniors
- Host Parent Night, discuss Idaho LAUNCH and Next Steps Idaho
- Update Senior Project Plan
- Begin post-secondary meetings with seniors

Important Dates

- Direct Admissions letters are mailed to graduating seniors

OCTOBER

10

Professional Development

- LAUNCH Regional Fall Convening
- Spotlight: Counselor Suite Overview
- Spotlight: Advanced Opportunities

Monthly Focus Tasks

- Graduation planning
- Prep and Host a College Fair night, invite LAUNCH
- Host a College Application Week/Night
- PSAT Prep
- PSAT: Invite Students
- Approve Advanced Opportunities fall funding
- Remind students and parents of scholarship deadlines

Important Dates

- Idaho LAUNCH Grant and Idaho Opportunity Scholarship applications open in October
- Apply Idaho application opens in October
- Waypoint Conference is **October 6 - 8**
- FAFSA application opens for 2026-2027
- FAFSA Completion Competition Opens

College & Career Advising Calendar: Q2

Check out the latest professional development events and find opportunities for students by visiting the Next Steps Idaho Calendar at nextsteps.idaho.gov/calendar

School Events Overview

Plan ahead for the different school events that you may want to host or participate in providing information for attendees.

- FSA ID workshop
- Scholarship and Financial Aid Help Sessions
- Idaho LAUNCH Sessions
- Advanced Opportunities Night
- ASVAB Night

Outreach Goals

Create outreach goals for yourself in order to inform your community about the happenings!

- Send reminder emails to teachers, staff, parents, and students regarding upcoming school events and dates.
- Visit: nextsteps.idaho.gov/media-kit for templates and materials.



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NOVEMBER

11

Professional Development

- Spotlight: FSA ID, FAFSA
- Spotlight: Idaho LAUNCH Updates
- Community of Practice: Dual Credit Advising
- Skill Building: GEAR UP

Monthly Focus Tasks

- Plan and host a Financial Aid night
- Prepare Senior Exit Surveys
- Provide students and parents with the college application timeline available at nextsteps.idaho.gov
- Inform students and parents about the common application
- Host an ASVAB Night
- Graduation planning
- Remind students and parents of scholarship and grant deadlines
- Idaho LAUNCH priority application deadline November 30

DECEMBER

12

Professional Development

- Community of Practice: FAFSA Goals, FAFSA Events
- Community of Practice: Open Mic
- Skill Building: GEAR UP: Speaker Lab – Deliver Effective Lessons

Important Dates

- Idaho LAUNCH Contingent Offer Letters sent to students

Monthly Focus Tasks

- Host Scholarship and FAFSA Help Sessions
- Graduation Planning
- Senior Exit Surveys for early grads
- Remind students and parents of scholarship and grant deadlines

JANUARY

01

Professional Development

- Spotlight: FAFSA Demo
- Spotlight: Counselor Suite Scholarship Page 101

Monthly Focus Tasks

- Review/Approve Advanced Opportunities funding
- Advanced Opportunities Night/Presentation
- Graduation Planning
- Remind students and parents of scholarship and grant deadlines

College & Career Advising Calendar: Q3

Check out the latest professional development events and find opportunities for students by visiting the Next Steps Idaho Calendar at nextsteps.idaho.gov/calendar

School Events Overview

Plan ahead for the different school events that you may want to host or participate in providing information for attendees.

- Post-Secondary Options

Outreach Goals

Create outreach goals for yourself in order to inform your community about the happenings!

- Send reminder emails to teachers, staff, parents, and students regarding upcoming school events and dates.
- Visit nextsteps.idaho.gov/media-kit for templates and materials.



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FEBRUARY

02

Professional Development

- Spotlight: Career Pathway Plans
- Skill Building: FAFSA Changes: Lessons Learned So Far

Monthly Focus Tasks

- Graduation Planning
- Prepare for Higher Ed Day
- Approve Spring Advanced Opportunities funding
- Remind students and parents of scholarship and grant deadlines

Important Dates

- Tschudy Family Scholarship Deadline is February 15
- Apply for Teacher Externship, application found at STEM Action Center

MARCH

03

Professional Development

- Spotlight: Next Steps for Idaho Opportunity Scholarship
- Skill Building: Financial Aid Offers & Verification

Monthly Focus Tasks

- Graduation Planning
- Remind students and parents of scholarship and grant deadlines
- Finalize SAT plans

Important Dates

- Idaho Opportunity Scholarship deadline for applications and renewals is March 15
- Idaho Governor's Cup Scholarship (Academic) deadline is March 1

APRIL

04

Professional Development

- Community of Practice: Idaho LAUNCH and Next Steps Idaho Regional Convening
- Skill Building: Helping Students Find their Best Fit

Monthly Focus Tasks

- Graduation Planning
- Check in with Seniors on post-graduation plans
- Remind students and parents of scholarship and grant deadlines
- SAT
- Senior Exit Survey

Important Dates

- Idaho LAUNCH applications close on April 15
- Idaho Opportunity Scholarship deadline for adults (Summer Semester) is April 1
- Idaho LAUNCH Spring Regional Meeting
- Idaho Governor's Cup Scholarship (Career/Technical) Deadline is April 15
- 2026 Idaho FAFSA Completion Challenge ends

College & Career Advising Calendar: Q4

Check out the latest professional development events and find opportunities for students by visiting the Next Steps Idaho Calendar at nextsteps.idaho.gov/calendar.

School Events Overview

Plan ahead for the different school events that you may want to host or participate in providing information for attendees.

- Graduation

Outreach Goals

Create outreach goals for yourself in order to inform your community about the happenings!

- Send reminder emails to teachers, staff, parents, and students regarding upcoming school events and dates.
Visit: nextsteps.idaho.gov/media-kit for templates and materials.



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MAY

05

Professional Development

- Spotlight: Myth Busters

Monthly Focus Tasks

- College prep
- Senior exit surveys
- Senior check-ins with post-graduation plans
- Graduation planning
- Review financial aid packages with students
- Review/Submit Advanced Opportunities funding
- Remind students and parents of scholarship and grant deadlines

Important Dates

- Register for the Idaho Division of Career Technical Education's CTE Connect Conference coming up this summer (May 1-30)
- Final contingent Idaho LAUNCH awards will be announced by June 1

JUNE

06

Professional Development

- Community of Practice: Business & Educator Exchange, NNU
- Community of Practice: iSTEM Conferences
- Skill Building: Self-Care, Start Your Summer Right

Monthly Focus Tasks

- Complete the Idaho LAUNCH Feedback Survey

Important Dates

- Apply Idaho application closes on June 30
- All direct admissions applications must be submitted by June 30

JULY

07

Professional Development

- Community of Practice: CTE Connect Conference
- Community of Practice: Idaho Indian Education Summit

Monthly Focus Tasks

- Fast Forward via Advanced Opportunities
- Plan for Idaho Connect in the '25-'26 school year
- Make virtual, college, military, and program visits
- Prep for College Application Week, FAFSA Night, etc.
- Browse the Next Steps Idaho Assessments and Reflections curriculum (college/program searches, scholarship/financial aid)
- ASVAB - schedule for students interested in the military

Important Dates

- Idaho Opportunity Scholarship deadline for adults (Fall Semester) is July 1

Idaho State High School Graduation Requirements

State Minimum Credit Requirements

Core Subject Areas.....	29 credits
Electives.....	17 credits
Additional Requirements	See Descriptions
Total Credits.....	46 credits (minimum)

Core Subject Areas	29 credits
Language Arts	9 credits
Language Arts <i>8 credits</i>	Language Arts shall consist of language study, composition, and literature and be aligned to the Idaho Content Standards for the appropriate grade level.
Communications <i>1 credit</i>	Communications consisting of oral communication and technological applications that includes a course in speech, a course in debate, or a sequence of instructional activities that meet the Idaho Speech Content Standards.
Mathematics	6 credits
Algebra I (equivalent) <i>2 credits</i>	Secondary mathematics includes Integrated Mathematics, Applied Mathematics, Business Mathematics, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Fundamentals of Calculus, Probability and Statistics, Discrete Mathematics, and courses in mathematical problem solving and quantitative reasoning including mathematics taken through career technical education programs.
Geometry (equivalent) <i>2 credits</i>	
Student Choice <i>2 credits</i>	Dual credit engineering and computer science courses aligned to the state standards for grades nine (9) through twelve (12), including AP Computer Science and dual credit computer science courses may also be counted as a mathematics credit. Students who choose to take computer science and dual credit engineering courses may not concurrently count such courses as both a mathematics and science credit for the same course.

Core Subject Areas

Science**6 credits**

Lab-based
2 credits

Student Choice
4 credits

Instruction in the following: earth and space sciences, physical science, life sciences, computer science, biology, chemistry, environment, or approved applied sciences.

Social Studies**5 credits**

US History
2 credits

Government
2 credits

Economics &
Financial Literacy¹
1 credit

Courses such as geography, sociology, psychology, and world history may be offered as electives, but are not to be counted as a social studies requirement.

Humanities**2 credits**

Student Choice
2 credits

May include visual arts, music, theatre, dance, or world language aligned to Idaho content standards for those subjects. Other courses such as literature, history, philosophy, architecture, or comparative world religions may satisfy the humanities standards if the course is aligned to the **Interdisciplinary Humanities Content Standards**.

Health**1 credit**

Student Choice
1 credit

Course must be aligned to **Idaho Content Standards** and a student should receive a minimum of one (1) class period on psychomotor cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training as outlined in the American Heart Association (AHA) Guidelines for CPR to include the proper utilization of an automatic external defibrillator (AED) as part of the Health/Wellness course.

¹ Beginning in school year 2023–2024, financial literacy is a requirement for high school graduation. Please see Financial Literacy document for reference.

² Additional information on the updated graduation requirements beginning in the 2025–2026 school year can be found at: sde.idaho.gov/topics/hs-grad-req/ and sde.idaho.gov/topics/hs-grad-req/files/general/Graduation-Implementation-Guide.pdf

Idaho State High School Graduation Requirements

State Minimum Credit Requirements

■ Core Subject Areas.....	29 credits
■ Electives.....	17 credits
■ Additional Requirements	See Descriptions
Total Credits.....	46 credits (minimum)

Electives	17 credits
Additional Requirements	

District Requirements

The local school district or LEA may establish graduation requirements beyond the state minimum.

Advanced Opportunities

Districts must offer at least one Advanced Opportunity such as Dual Credit, Advanced Placement, Technical Competency Credit, or International Baccalaureate.

Advanced Opportunities

Senior Project

The senior project is a culminating project to show a student's ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and communicate that knowledge and understanding. A student must complete a senior project by the end of grade twelve (12). Senior projects may be multi-year projects, group or individual projects, or approved pre-internship or school to work internship programs, at the discretion of the school district or charter school. The project must include elements of research, development of a thesis using experiential learning or integrated project based learning experiences and presentation of the project outcome. Additional requirements for a senior project are at the discretion of the local school district or LEA. Completion of a postsecondary certificate or degree at the time of high school graduation or an approved preinternship or internship program may be used to meet this requirement.



Civics Test

All secondary students must demonstrate that they have met the state **civics and government standard** by successfully completing the civics test or alternate path. Successful completion of this requirement must be reflected on the student's transcript.

Physical Education

High schools are required to provide instructional offerings in Physical Education (fitness).

Physical Education Content Standards

Middle School Credits

Students must meet 8th grade math standards before being permitted to 9th grade.

A student will have met the high school content and credit requirement for any required high school course if: The student completes such course with a grade C or higher before entering 9th grade, course meets the same content standards that are required for high school, and course is taught by a properly certified teacher. Parents of middle school students taking a course for high school credit must be notified that the course is available for high school credit and must be given the option as to whether or not the course is transcribed. Students/families paying for courses with Advanced Opportunities funds are consenting to the course being transcribed as high school credit.

College & Career Readiness Competencies

Proficiency in basic academic skills, including math, reading and writing, are foundational to an educated and productive citizen. Successful application of this learning requires high technical and behavioral competencies. Together, these skills are critical for student success, whether at the collegiate level or in the workforce. Therefore, it is equally important that students, teachers, and policymakers have a common understanding and agreement about the specific competencies a high school graduate will need to possess in order to lead a successful and meaningful life.

Approved in 2017 by the Idaho State Board of Education, the competencies represent a set of knowledge, skills, and attributes that broadly prepare high school graduates for a successful transition into some form of postsecondary education and/or the workplace. College and career readiness is the attainment and demonstration of these competencies. Subskills and performance level descriptors, identified through the work of the Idaho Mastery Education Network and the Idaho State Department of Education, support achieving the competencies and allow an opportunity to measure performance.





Competency Titles

01. Knowledge of Core Subjects
02. Critical Thinking/Creative Problem Solving
03. Oral/Written Communications
04. Teamwork/Collaboration
05. Digital Literacy
06. Leadership
07. Professionalism/Work Ethic
08. Career Exploration and Development
09. Citizenship/Civic Responsibility
10. Financial Literacy

Competency Sets For Classroom Use & Printing

Competency Set: view by Competency with all Skills and Levels

(in printable large format 17x11, PDF)

sde.idaho.gov/mastery-ed/files/competencies/Idaho-Competencies-Map-Level-1-6.pdf

Competency Set: view by Level Bands [1-3], [2-4], [3-5], [4-6]

(8.5x11, PDF)

sde.idaho.gov/mastery-ed/files/competencies/Idaho-Competencies-Leveled-Set-Map.pdf

Link to Full Competency Set

(single document PDF)

sde.idaho.gov/mastery-ed/files/competencies/Idaho-College-and-Career-Readiness-Competencies-Level-1-6.pdf

Text-only Accessible Competency Set (PDF)

sde.idaho.gov/mastery-ed/files/competencies/Idaho-Competencies-Accessible.pdf

Workforce Readiness and Career Technical Education (CTE) Diploma

Twenty-first-century graduates are expected to have more skills than ever before. Not only must they have strong academic skills in reading, math, and science, but they must also be able to apply these skills in the workplace. CTE programs are designed to ensure graduates obtain the academic and technical skills that give students multiple pathways to success.

To acknowledge that CTE programs enhance students' high school experience and help prepare them for the demands of today's employers, the 2021 Idaho State Legislature created the Workforce Readiness CTE Diploma.

Like all high school students, students enrolled in CTE programs need to meet the academic requirements. In addition, they must also demonstrate their increased level of college and career readiness.

More information on the Workforce Readiness and Career Technical Education (CTE) Diploma:

<https://cte.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/WRCTE-Diploma-2.pdf>

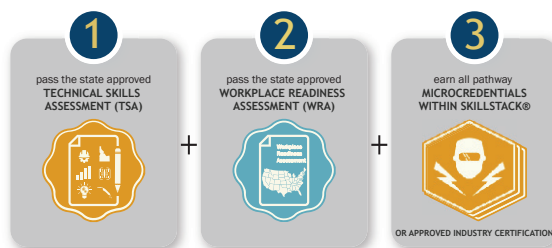
For Students

The diploma helps them:

- Prepare for both college and careers.
- Earn employer-recognized certifications and microcredentials and gain practical, real-world working experience.
- Earn college credits while still in high school.
- Develop and articulate valuable technical and employability skills sought by employers.
- Explore Idaho's high-skill, high-demand occupations.
- Enter the world after graduation confident in their ability to meet their employer's needs.



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO COMPLETE A CTE PATHWAY ARE ELIGIBLE IF THEY:



For Employers

The diploma helps them:

- Find qualified employees for their most hard-to-fill positions.
- Reduce the time and money invested in training new employees.
- Identify candidates who possess the employability skills necessary to succeed in the workplace.

For more information, visit

cte.idaho.gov/students/workforce-readiness-and-career-technical-education-cte-diploma

College and Career Readiness Funding

As legislated by Senate Bill 1290 in 2016, each school district and charter school in Idaho who serve students in grades eight (8) through twelve (12) shall establish a college and career advising program for their students. These programs can include advising personnel, near peer/college mentors, students ambassadors, and virtual coaching, among other activities.

Section 33-1002, Educational support program. The educational support program is calculated as follows:

- For school districts and public charter schools with one hundred (100) or more students enrolled in grades eight (8) through twelve (12), a pro rata distribution based on students enrolled in grades eight (8) through twelve (12) or eighteen thousand dollars (\$18,000), whichever is greater.
- For school districts and public charter schools with fewer than one hundred (100) students enrolled in grades eight (8) through twelve (12), one hundred eighty dollars (\$180) per student enrolled in grades eight (8) through twelve (12) or nine thousand dollars (\$9,000), whichever is greater.



Annually the state legislature allocates

\$9,000,000

to support college & career readiness activities across the state.

Funds established by formula are distributed to school districts twice per year: half in December and half in spring. Districts have discretion on how to allocate these funds. Contact your district office to learn more about how these funds are being utilized to support your students.

Section 33-1212A, Idaho Code, governs the use of these funds and requirements.

COLLEGE AND CAREER ADVISORS AND STUDENT MENTORS.

01. College and career advising, and student mentoring are essential components of students' educational experience. Such advising and mentoring provide all students with an early opportunity to identify academic strengths, areas in need of improvement and areas of interest for the purpose of making informed choices and setting postsecondary education and career goals. The focus of college and career planning is to help students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve academic success and to be college and career ready upon high school graduation.
02. School districts and charter schools may employ noncertificated staff to serve in the role of college and career advisors and student mentors. Appropriate alternative forms of advising and mentoring shall be research-based and may include the following:

High contact programs such as:

- » Near peer or college student mentors; and
- » Counselor, teacher, or paraprofessional as advisor or mentor.

Collaborative programs such as:

- » Student ambassadors; and
 - » Cooperative agreements with other school districts or postsecondary institutions; and
 - » Virtual coach or mentor programs.
03. School districts and charter schools shall provide professional development in the area of college and career advising to all staff serving in the role of student mentors or advisors. All individuals providing services in the role of a college and career advisor must have a basic level of training or experience in the area of advising or mentoring to provide such services.
 04. School districts and charter schools shall notify parents or guardians of all students in grades eight (8) through twelve (12) of the availability of college and career advising provided by the district and how to access such services.
 05. The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules necessary for the administration of this section.

Questions should be directed to:

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(208) 332-6946
jdeahl@sde.idaho.gov

WAYS TO PAY

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*makin' moves
my way*



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Financial Aid

Financial aid is defined as funds provided to students and families to pay for postsecondary education and training expenses. Learn more about the different types of financial aid below.

Grants

Most grants do not have to be repaid. Some grants, like Idaho LAUNCH, may require repayment if students do not meet the terms of the agreement they accepted when awarded the money. Learn more about federal grant programs at studentaid.gov

Loans

Borrowed money; must be repaid. Learn more about federal student loans at studentaid.gov/sites/default/files/federal-loan-programs.pdf

Work Study

Earned money. The Federal Work Study Program allows students to earn money to pay for school while working part-time.

Scholarships

Do not need to be repaid. Scholarships are awarded based on a variety of factors including merit, talent, need, community service, leadership, etc. Scholarships can come from a variety of sources including local foundations, banks, community organizations, colleges and universities, state agencies, national organizations, and more.

The US Department of Education distributes

\$150 billion

in federal student aid each year.



Deadlines: Financial Aid deadlines vary by state and institution. Check state, provider, and college websites for the most current information.

More information: studentaid.gov

IDAHO LAUNCH

The Idaho LAUNCH grant program aims to prepare students for Idaho's workforce needs, by providing grants for students to attend education and training programs in Idaho.

How can LAUNCH be used?

Idaho LAUNCH provides a one-time opportunity for Idaho high school seniors to cover 80% of the tuition and fees at an eligible institution, up to a maximum amount of \$8,000.

To be eligible students must:

- Graduate from an Idaho High School or equivalent
 - » Public School
 - » Charter School
 - » Private School
 - » Homeschool
 - » GED (under the age of 21 by 4/15)
- Be an Idaho resident
- Be enrolled in or have applied to an in-demand career program at an eligible Idaho institution
- Begin Post-Secondary Program by Fall semester after graduation
- Complete a Career Pathway Plan (Detailed information is available at: nextsteps.idaho.gov/LAUNCH)

Students can receive up to one half (\$4,000) of the initial grant award in the first year of a program. However, for programs that are less than 12 months in length, students can use the full awarded amount (80% of tuition and fees up to \$8,000) in one year.

Go to scholarships.idaho.gov to apply!
Applications are open between October 1 and April 15.

\$75M

There is approximately \$75 million available for Idaho LAUNCH funding. This means that it is possible the state may fund between **9,000 and 10,000 awards** per year.

Application Opens
October 1

Application Closes
April 15

Contingent Offers
Applications will continue to be accepted until the closing date of April 15 with contingent award notifications being offered between December and April.

Please note: always check nextsteps.idaho.gov for the most up-to-date information on approved programs and providers, as these will be updated regularly.

FAQs

Have I heard of this program before?

A version of Idaho LAUNCH that serves adult learners seeking to upskill or change careers has been around since 2020 and is referred to as Idaho LAUNCH for Adults. Learn more at idaholaunch.com.

Idaho LAUNCH for Students began with the Graduating Class of 2024. Each high school graduating class since then is invited to participate in this program. Idaho LAUNCH for Students aims to connect high school seniors with in-demand career throughout Idaho.

Are students required to fill out a FAFSA to receive Idaho LAUNCH funding?

No, applying for FAFSA is not a requirement for this grant. However, Idaho LAUNCH will only cover 80% (up to \$8,000) of a program's tuition and fees. Idaho LAUNCH grant dollars cannot cover the cost of room and board. Other financial aid and scholarship opportunities may pay the remaining program costs and expenses.

How will students be notified if they have been offered LAUNCH funding?

Students will receive email notifications from the email idaholaunch@wdc.idaho.gov. Students must have an active email address to receive information from Scholarship Idaho that requires their attention. Students cannot use a school-based email address, as they will no longer have access to the account post-graduation. Scholarship Idaho will send notifications to students before and after graduation.

Does this only work for Idaho schools?

Yes, Idaho LAUNCH is a grant for Idaho students attending post-secondary training at approved Idaho schools/providers.

How does the application cycle work for Idaho LAUNCH?

The Idaho LAUNCH application opens on October 1, and closes on April 15. Award Letters are contingent upon verification of eligibility.

Application
Opens
October 1

Application
Closes
April 15



Contingent Offers

Applications will continue to be accepted until April 15 with award notifications rolling through the spring.

Final Award Letters

Final Award Letters will be issued in late Spring after eligibility is verified. Students will accept their final Idaho LAUNCH grant in the Idaho Grant Management System, not Scholarship Idaho.

Idaho LAUNCH FAQs continued...

What are some EXAMPLES of how programs could be funded by Idaho LAUNCH?

Please refer to nextsteps.idaho.gov/LAUNCH for the complete listing of eligible programs.

Program	Example Total Cost	Example of Portion Paid for by LAUNCH	Example of Remaining Amount to be Paid by Student
Workforce Training Program (ex: CNA, Welding, Pharmacy Tech)	\$1,800	\$1,440	\$360
Commercial Driver's License	\$6,000	\$4,800	\$1,200
Community College Course	\$400	\$320	\$80
Community College Degree	\$7,000	\$5,600	\$1,400
Apprenticeship Program (2-year program)	\$5,000	\$4,000	\$1,000
Apprenticeship Program (5-year program)	\$10,000	\$8,000	\$2,000
Private Trade School Program	\$18,000	\$8,000	\$10,000

Note: Actual costs will be dependent on the program and institution. These figures are for demonstration only. Idaho LAUNCH covers 80%, or up to \$8,000 of tuition and fees. Students may use other scholarships and grants to cover remaining costs.

IDAHO LAUNCH

What if schools, parents, and students have questions about the Idaho LAUNCH program?

Check Next Steps Idaho for answers to common questions at nextsteps.idaho.gov/LAUNCH
For questions not answered by the website, please send an email to idaholaunch@wdc.idaho.gov

What is the difference between a Contingent Offer Letter and a Final Award Letter?

A Contingent Offer Letter is sent to applicants who submit their application and are on track to meet the program's eligibility requirements. This offer is contingent upon verification of eligibility completion. Final Award Letters will be issued in late spring upon successful verification of the application.

Contingent Offer Letters are distributed through Scholarship Idaho. Students will be required to either accept or decline their contingent award. If students do not respond within the designated time frame, their award may be offered to another candidate in future contingent award rounds. Students are advised to check their email over the summer.

Final Award Letters are distributed through the Idaho Grant Management System. Students will be required to either accept or decline their award. If students do not respond within the designated time frame, their award may be offered to another candidate who is on the waitlist. Students are advised to check their email over the summer.

What happens if there isn't enough LAUNCH funding for all eligible applications?

Prioritization will be based on in-demand careers and financial need. Applications will be ranked based on the program a student selects during the application process and how/if it connects to the list of in-demand careers approved by the Idaho Workforce Development Council, which will be reviewed and approved annually.

Who do I contact for questions regarding the Idaho LAUNCH program?

- Visit the Next Steps Idaho website to find the most current information on the Idaho LAUNCH program at nextsteps.idaho.gov/LAUNCH
- Urgent questions can be directed to Sherawn Reberry at sherawn.reberry@wdc.idaho.gov
- Please email all other questions to idaholaunch@wdc.idaho.gov

For more, and frequently updated, answers to FAQs, visit nextsteps.idaho.gov/LAUNCH

Avoiding Idaho LAUNCH Grant Repayment

Before accepting a final award, participating students should review and confirm the institution and program listed on their application. These details will be verified each time an invoice is paid on behalf of the participant.

Changing institutions, providers, or programs may cause participants to lose or have to repay their Idaho LAUNCH Grant. They may also have to repay the grant money if they don't meet certain academic expectations once they arrive. These instances are explained below:

Unsatisfactory Academic Progress

A school or provider reports the participant is not meeting academic requirements or is making unsatisfactory progress.

Expulsion

Defined by individual schools or industry standards. Generally, refers to a case where a participant is asked to leave the institution or program. Voluntary Drop or No-Show: If a participant fails to start or decides to leave a program before completing their program.

Job Out

Participants who leave training to pursue a job opportunity that is not related to their chosen program or in-demand career. Please note, if participants provide evidence that they left for a job related to their program, they won't be required to pay back funds.

Voluntary Drop or No-Show

If a participant fails to start or decides to leave a program before completing their program.



Exceptions may exist based on special circumstances, exclusions, and an appeal process. Repayment terms and conditions vary, depending on the situation.

Tips For Accepting Your Final Idaho LAUNCH Grant Award Offer

01. Final Award Offers will arrive in the email inbox of the account you used for Scholarship Idaho. If you don't see your offer, check your SPAM or Junk folder.
02. Final Award Offer emails contain a personal invite link to access your account in the Idaho LAUNCH Grant Management system.
 - » Contact: idaholaunch@wdc.idaho.gov if you need help using your personal link to create an account.
03. During the final offer acceptance process you will need to validate several items:
 - » **ID Verification** — a government issued identification (such as a driver's license, driver's permit, passport, ID card). The document cannot be expired.
 - » **Your Residency** — Be prepared — you may need to upload documentation to verify your residency (such as driver's license, government ID, utility bill, voter registration card, etc). The document may not be expired and must have your name and current address.
 - » **Your Graduation from High School** — Be prepared — you will need to upload a copy of your diploma or transcript. Please note, you may need to enable edits and indicate that you have graduated from high school and adjust (or add) your graduation date.
 - » **Career Pathway Plan (CPP) Completion** — You are required to complete a Career Pathway Plan; Use this link (nextsteps.idaho.gov/assets/uploads/2024/04/LAUNCH-CPP-List-4-22-24.pdf) to determine what your school has decided for completing the CPP.
04. Once you've finished setting up your account, validating your residency, graduation, program, etc., it may take the Idaho LAUNCH Team up to a few weeks for your final award to be approved, as this is a manual process. Students will receive an email from the system when their verification has been completed.
05. To find out information about your final Idaho LAUNCH award you will continue to login to the Idaho Grants Management system. This is where you will update information and review your remaining award amount.

Tips for Hosting an Idaho LAUNCH Information Session

As Idaho LAUNCH is a relatively new initiative, we strongly encourage high school counselors to actively promote the program throughout the school year. This can be achieved by incorporating an Idaho LAUNCH spotlight during a parent night, sharing information in the school newsletter, distributing posters and promotional materials sent to your school, or delivering in-class presentations about higher education opportunities. Your outreach activities will play an important role in reaching students who have traditionally encountered limited access to post-secondary opportunities.

Templates and training materials can be found at nextsteps.idaho.gov/media-kit

Before the School Year Begins

Create a school goal for the number of seniors that will apply for the Idaho LAUNCH program during the school year.

Before the Event

Finalize the event format and date(s), along with identifying the necessary training materials. Inform and involve school staff.

- Present at an all-school staff meeting
- Send a “heads-up” email to all staff
- Coordinate with administrators for support
- Invite the Idaho LAUNCH team to participate

Recruit your team.

- Reach out to your regional Idaho LAUNCH/Next Steps Idaho Ambassador
- Team up with other counselors

Communicate, communicate, communicate!

- Consider using the pre-made email templates to notify students, parents, teachers, and staff members of your event

Prepare training materials.

- Review the ready-to-use training materials

During the Info Session

Take notes of any unanswered questions and be sure to follow up with your regional Idaho LAUNCH/Next Steps Idaho Ambassador for further clarification.

After the Info Session

Reach out to your regional Idaho LAUNCH/Next Steps Idaho Ambassador to address any questions that arose during the event.

Gather feedback from students, parents, teachers, and other parties involved.

Idaho Opportunity Scholarship



The Idaho Opportunity scholarship is awarded to Idaho residents that have graduated, or will graduate, from an Idaho high school, Idaho homeschool, or who passes a GED/HSE test in Idaho and are pursuing their first certificate, associate's, or bachelor's at an approved Idaho institution. Applicants must have at least a 2.7 GPA. The application for the Idaho Opportunity scholarship, Idaho's biggest scholarship program, takes just a few minutes to submit.

Award decisions are based on a combination of need and merit. Applications are ranked based on 70% need (using the Student Aid Index from a student's FAFSA) and 30% merit (Cumulative GPA).

Just because a student isn't eligible for the Pell Grant, does NOT mean they shouldn't apply. Many students receive the scholarship each year who do not qualify for any other need-based aid. This scholarship can be renewed for up to 4 years.

October 1

Application opens

March 1

Application deadline including FAFSA

Mid-April

Formal offers made following official need & merit ranking

The Basics

The Idaho Opportunity Scholarship awards up to \$3,500 per academic year and is renewable for up to four years.

To qualify for this scholarship, applicants must meet all of the following criteria:

- Have an unweighted, cumulative GPA of at least 2.7
- Be an Idaho resident
- Graduated or will graduate from an Idaho high school, Idaho homeschool, or its equivalent (GED/HSE from Idaho)
- Must attend during the upcoming academic year (fall semester)
- Can pursue a first certificate, first associates', or first bachelor's degree
- Complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by March 1
- Maintain satisfactory academic standing as specified in program rules
- Must attend one of these eligible Idaho colleges or universities:
 - » University of Idaho
 - » Boise State University
 - » Lewis Clark State College
 - » Idaho State University
 - » The College of Idaho
 - » Northwest Nazarene University
 - » Brigham Young University – Idaho
 - » Western Governors University
 - » College of Eastern Idaho
 - » College of Southern Idaho
 - » College of Western Idaho
 - » North Idaho College

Students can apply at scholarships.idaho.gov

Idaho Opportunity Scholarship & Idaho LAUNCH Comparison Chart

	Idaho LAUNCH	Idaho Opportunity Scholarship
Amount	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to \$8,000 one-time Covers 80% tuition and fees Receive up to 1/2 of funds in year one (\$4,000), unless enrolled in a program that is less than 12 months You will have three years to utilize the Idaho LAUNCH grant dollars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to \$3,500 per year Renewable for up to 4 years The Idaho Opportunity Scholarship requires the FAFSA since there is a need component to the ranking
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate from an accredited Idaho high school or equivalent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public School Charter School Private School Homeschool GED Be an Idaho resident Be enrolled in or have applied to an in-demand career program at an eligible Idaho institution Begin enrollment by fall semester after graduation, unless granted an extension Complete a Career Pathway Plan or equivalent, submitted for approval by each district <p>NOTE: During the application process, students will be required to pick a program (major or subject area of focus) and the school they plan to attend. While they are required to make selections now, these decisions can be revisited and updated by students later. If students make updates after they have been offered a contingent offer, it may impact their final offer.</p> <p>Visit nextsteps.idaho.gov/LAUNCH for a complete listing of the eligible in-demand careers and programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have an unweighted, cumulative GPA of at least 2.7 Be an Idaho resident Graduated or will graduate from an accredited Idaho high school, Idaho homeschool, or its equivalent (GED/HSE from Idaho) Must attend during the upcoming academic year (fall semester) Must pursue a first certificate, first associates', or first bachelor's degree Complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by March 1 Must attend one of these eligible Idaho colleges or universities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> College of Western Idaho College of Eastern Idaho College of Southern Idaho North Idaho College University of Idaho Boise State University Lewis Clark State College Idaho State University The College of Idaho Northwest Nazarene University Brigham Young University – Idaho Western Governors University
Application Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Submit an application through Scholarship Idaho No FAFSA required No GPA required 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Submit an application through Scholarship Idaho Submit a FAFSA by Mar 1 Receive and accept a final offer, emailed by Scholarship Idaho
Deadline	April 15	March 1

*Starting with the graduating class of 2025, students may only be awarded either Idaho LAUNCH or Idaho Opportunity, but not both.

Idaho LAUNCH or Idaho Opportunity Scholarship?

As an Idaho resident graduating from high school, there is more than one program for which you can apply to assist with funding your post-secondary education or training. Answer the questions below to find out which state aid program is right for your career plan.

NOTE: Attending in-state education or training is a requirement for receiving funding from either state aid program.

1. Is your GPA 2.7 or higher?	➔	YES <i>Go to next question.</i>	NO <i>Go to result #1.</i>
2. Is your intended career listed as “in-demand” in Idaho?	➔	YES <i>Go to next question.</i>	NO <i>Go to result #2.</i>
3. What type of post-secondary education or training do you plan on attending? A. Workforce/Private Training Provider B. Community College/4-year Institution	➔	A. <i>Go to result #1.</i>	B. <i>Go to next question.</i>
4. Do you have any commitments after highschool graduation that could delay starting your classes or training by the fall of the same year?	➔	YES <i>Go to result #1.</i>	NO <i>Go to next question.</i>
5. Will your family be completing the FAFSA?	➔	YES <i>Go to result #3.</i>	NO <i>Go to result #1.</i>

Result #1

Apply to Idaho LAUNCH

Result #2

Apply to Idaho Opportunity Scholarship

Result #3

Apply to Idaho LAUNCH or Idaho Opportunity Scholarship

Still not sure which program is right for you? Check out a comparison chart at nextsteps.idaho.gov/LAUNCH

To start the application process for either program, visit scholarship.idaho.gov

There is an interactive version of this form at: nextsteps.idaho.gov/launch

Other Idaho State Scholarships

Idaho Governor's Cup Scholarships

- Deadlines:
 - » Academic – March 1
 - » Career/Technical – April 15
- Applicants must have **AT LEAST** a 2.8 GPA
- The Office of the State Board of Education handles the application intake process. The Governor's Cup committee is responsible for reviewing applications and making award decisions. To connect with their staff, please visit idahogovernorscup.org

\$90M

Approximately **\$90 million** is available to support Idaho students going on to postsecondary education.

Armed Forces/Public Safety Officer Scholarship

- Applications are open year-round.
- This scholarship is for dependents of fallen or permanently disabled (to the point they are unemployed) Idaho members of the armed forces or Idaho public safety officers.
- Eligible applicants must be Idaho residents.
- Contact the state Scholarship Program Manager at jmiller@edu.idaho.gov for application instructions and pre-screening.

To learn more about Idaho State Scholarships, visit nextsteps.idaho.gov/scholarship-idaho

Students can apply for all Idaho scholarships and grants at scholarships.idaho.gov

Career Help for Kids of Military Parents and Veterans

The Idaho Veterans Chamber of Commerce offers free benefits and resources to support the children of those who've served in the armed forces. From college to trade school to an apprenticeship program, this is designed to take your education and career to the next level.

- Explore apprenticeships and other hands-on careers that align with your interests.
- Connect with our Idaho Veteran and Family Employer Network — featuring employers certified to approve education benefits and looking to hire!
- Get one-on-one guidance to help discover the right navigation pathway for you, including school, certifications, or apprenticeship benefits you could qualify for.

Learn more at idahoveterans.org/careerseeker

Advanced Opportunities



Advanced Opportunities is a program that provides funding for Idaho students to use toward educational and career pathways while they are in middle and high school years.

The program provides \$4,625 for each student in grades 7-12 attending an Idaho public school. Funds can be utilized toward particular costs that students may incur for the courses and programs listed below.

Overload Courses

Overload courses are high school courses that are taken in excess of a student's full course load and outside the regular school day. Students can use funds up to \$225 per eligible course.

Dual Credit Courses

A dual credit course is a college course taken for both high school and college credit. Students can request funding for up to \$75 per credit. Dual credit resources for families can be found at prtoolkit.org/dual-credit

Exams

Students can use funds to pay for the full cost of many exams (including proctoring fees). Exams can include: college entrance exams, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and professional certifications.

Workforce Training Courses

Students can use funds for approved courses that directly relate to workforce needs.

Early Graduation Scholarship

This scholarship can be awarded for a student's early graduation, that must be at least one year early. Scholarship is estimated at \$2,400.

Funds Spent in Fiscal Year 2024 by Expenditure Type

Dual Credit	\$23,779,286
Exams	\$1,841,878
Overload Courses	\$2,251,141
Workforce Training	\$162,676

Fiscal Year 2024 Advanced Opportunities Totals

Payment Totals	\$28,934,703
Students Served	44,955

How to Access Advanced Opportunities

Sign Up for an Account

Staff are assigned an administrator account through the local district IT or by contacting SDE staff. Students should create an Advanced Opportunities account at advancedops.sde.idaho.gov. Creating an account will allow students to request funds and track their account balance. Once an account is created it must be approved by school staff. In some cases, school districts handle the request funding process internally, this is a local education agency decision.

Participation Form

Students and parents must fill out an Advanced Opportunities participation form that outlines program risks and regulations prior to using funds. This form needs to be turned in at the school and will be kept on file with other student records. The participation form can be found online in the student's account at advancedops.sde.idaho.gov or at the student's school.

Homeschool and Private School Students

According to Idaho code 33-4603, students attending an accredited Idaho private school may be eligible for up to \$2,500 for dual credit courses and exams. Homeschool students must be dually enrolled in an Idaho public or an accredited Idaho private school to be eligible for Advanced Opportunities funding.

Student Responsibilities

The Advanced Opportunities program is an opportunity for students to participate in challenging and rigorous coursework. As students navigate the program, it is their responsibility to meet with their advisor or counselor to create a plan, work hard to successfully complete all courses, and pay attention to important deadlines and registration processes. Students who fail to earn credit for a course paid for by Advanced Opportunities, must then pay for and successfully earn credit or complete one (1) like course before future reimbursement can be made by the Idaho State Department of Education.

Advising

Students who use Advanced Opportunities funds to earn more than 15 dual credits must receive advising on how the credits will translate into their post-high school aspirations and fit into their program of study.

Course and Credit Transferability

How a course is transferred or accepted is determined by the receiving school/college. Student coursework should be taken in mind with the institution from which the student plans to earn a degree. If students are receiving college credit from more than one college, it is important to plan ahead and consider how courses will transfer, and which courses will count toward the degree program. Each college has a transfer guide that provides information on how credits will be accepted. Visit coursetransfer.idaho.gov for transferability.

Advanced Opportunities continued...

For more information visit the Advanced Opportunities website at

sde.idaho.gov/student-engagement/advanced-ops

Videos to share with students and parents (English/Spanish) nextsteps.idaho.gov/resources/ao

Deadlines for Portal Submission

Term	Request Funding Window	Verification Deadline	Submission Deadline
Summer 2025	April 7 – June 20, 2025	August 22, 2025	August 29, 2025
Fall 2025 Trimester 1	April 7 – October 15, 2025	November 14, 2025	November 21, 2025
Spring 2026	November 24 – March 15, 2026	May 8, 2026	May 15, 2026 May 22, 2026 (exams)
Trimester 2	November 24 – March 15, 2026	May 8, 2026	May 15, 2026 May 22, 2026 (exams)
Trimester 3	February 15 – April 3, 2026	May 8, 2026	May 15, 2026 May 22, 2026 (exams)

* Student Access window may vary by district, please contact your school/district office for local dates.

* All funding requests are to be made by the request funding window deadline.

IDEal — Idaho's 529 Education Savings Program

IDEal is Idaho's official 529 education savings program. These tax-advantaged 529 accounts are designed specifically to help individuals and families save and invest for their loved ones' postsecondary education.

Research shows that children with education savings accounts are about 7 times more likely to pursue and complete postsecondary education.

Idaho's 529 feature a variety of tax advantages:

- State income tax deduction of up to \$6,000 for single filers – or \$12,000 for couples filing jointly – per year from adjusted gross income for contributions. One of the most generous in the country.
- Any Idaho taxpayer can receive the tax deduction for contributions. They don't have to be the account holder.
- Tax-deferred earnings and tax-free withdrawals for qualified expenses.

The Idaho 529 plan is flexible and can be used for a variety of education options:

- Two or four-year universities nationwide
- Skills/career training programs
- Registered apprenticeships
- K-12 tuition (tuition only at any K-12 public, private or religious school. Limited to \$10,000 per student annually)
- Student loan repayment (up to \$10,000 per beneficiary per lifetime)



Starting an account is simple:

- Go to idsaves.org
- Choose initial contribution amount (as low as \$25) and payment method
- Choose an investment option – your choices are Vanguard investments or a Sallie Mae savings plan

Note: you will need the account owner and beneficiary's social security numbers.

Learn more at idsaves.org

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say less
i'm in



Idaho State Board of Education, Next Steps Idaho & Apply Idaho

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Julia Hopper

GEAR UP Program Coordinator
(208) 332-6943
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Idaho Workforce Development Council & Idaho LAUNCH

Idaho LAUNCH inquiries to

idaholaunch@wdc.idaho.gov

Dr. Sherawn Reberry

Education and Careers Director
(208) 488-7564
sherawn.reberry@wdc.idaho.gov

Theresa Peabody

LAUNCH Program Training Coordinator
(208) 488-7577
theresa.peabody@wdc.idaho.gov

Spencer Newsom

Technical Records Specialist 2
(208) 488-7578
spencer.newsom@wdc.idaho.gov

Next Steps Idaho

Next Steps Idaho is a free research tool that helps Idahoans transition to postsecondary opportunities and fulfilling employment.

Built by the Idaho State Board of Education, this website follows the widely accepted three-pronged approach to career readiness:

It helps visitors 1) identify their strengths and interests, 2) discover related jobs, and 3) pursue self-chosen opportunities through community support, funding (like scholarships), and real-world planning.

Next Steps Idaho promotes colleges, universities, apprenticeships, professional certification, licensing, and vocational training — whatever is best for the individual.

Career-Ready Portfolios

These portfolios give students the ability to customize their Next Steps Idaho journey.

Making an account is free, easy, and allows users to:

- Save assessment results
- Favorite careers
- Bookmark resources
- Collect completed activities
- Track events and deadlines

Each time a student logs in, a custom dashboard displays their previous work, reminders, and helpful links to pick up where they last left off.

A graphic consisting of a dark blue parallelogram tilted to the right. Inside the parallelogram, the text "35K" is written in a large, bold, yellow sans-serif font.

35K

Since its debut in 2022, more than **35,000 Idaho students** at 360 in-state schools and educational organizations have created accounts.

Next Steps Idaho is available 24/7. Requests and inquiries are typically acknowledged by staff within 2 business days.

Learn more at nextsteps.idaho.gov.
To sign up for a portfolio visit nextsteps.idaho.gov/login.

For Students: Apply Idaho



Apply Idaho is our state's free, common application platform where students can submit applications to up to 10 in-state colleges. Open October through June, this application is **ONLY** available to current-year Idaho high school seniors.

Apply Idaho invites Idaho high school seniors to apply at 1, or several, (or all 10!) participating in-state colleges and universities. The average application can be completed in less than 10 minutes.

With Apply Idaho, students:

Save time.

Just one application.

Save effort.

A shorter application.

Save money.

Without any application fees.

Maximize in-state options.

That can be sent to up to 10 in-state institutions.

Built to support student ambitions — from PhDs to professional certificates — ALL paths for in-state training can start from this single application.

Dates:

Opens the **first Monday in October**.

Closes on the **last day of June**.

12K

Over 50% of the senior class, **more than 12,000 students**, use Apply Idaho each year.

Visit our website at nextsteps.idaho.gov/apply-idaho

Watch our video to learn more youtu.be/goKVSyXx4c8

For Educators: Counselor Suite Idaho



Counselor Suite IDAHO

Counselor Suite Idaho (previously called FAFSA Web or the Idaho FAFSA Completion Project) provides high school counselors with a clear snapshot of their students' career readiness preparation.

Counselor Suite Idaho provides easy-to-read tables and data visualizations that document your students' progress toward FOUR continuing education 'checkpoints.'

-
01. **The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**
Students hoping to secure virtually *any* financial aid will need to submit a FAFSA each year. Counselor Suite Idaho indicates a student's FAFSA completion status and/or common errors in their submission.
 02. **Direct Admissions Idaho**
Direct Admissions proactively admits all Idaho public high school seniors to a minimum of six in-state colleges and universities each year. Counselor Suite Idaho indicates if students qualify for an additional two universities, for a total of eight.
 03. **Apply Idaho Applications**
Apply Idaho is a free, common college application for in-state institutions. In Counselor Suite Idaho, Idaho teachers or administrators will be able to see which grade-12 students have 'started,' 'not started,' or 'completed' their Apply Idaho application.
 04. **Scholarship Idaho Applications**
Scholarship Idaho is a single, common application for 8 state-managed scholarships. Counselor Suite Idaho indicates which state-managed scholarship(s) each student has submitted an application for and their offer status.

This platform is not available to students; only Idaho high school counselors, teachers, or administrators will be able to create an account.

New student cohorts are published annually — in mid-October — and data is updated daily.

Data for the FAFSA will appear two-weeks after the form opens each year.

Request access by contacting info@nextsteps.idaho.gov



Idaho SkillStack®

From learning to earning: Skills speak louder. Discover how SkillStack® helps learners document their skills and employers find the talent they need.

What is SkillStack®?

SkillStack® is a microcredential platform that allows Idaho's educators to validate the skills their learners demonstrate proficiency in, leading to industry-relevant digital badges.

What are microcredentials?

Microcredentials are recognized credentials awarded to learners for mastery of skills or concepts defined by industry and educators.

What is a digital badge?

A digital badge is a visual representation of a microcredential embedded with data to verify a learner's skills and achievements. Criteria within each badge have been developed with industry input.

How It Works



MICROCREDENTIALS are developed through a collaborative process that engages industry, educators, and other critical stakeholders to ensure they represent the skills learners need to succeed.



EDUCATORS assess, validate, and track mastery of defined skills and concepts using SkillStack®.



LEARNERS demonstrate skills and earn digital badges. They can build a portfolio to share badges they've earned to pursue employment and continuing educational opportunities.



EMPLOYERS can use SkillStack® to recruit to identify microcredentials specific to their hiring needs and contact potential candidates with the desired skills.

What are the benefits of digital badges?



VERIFIABLE

Prospective employers or postsecondary institutions can identify who issued the badge, when and where it was earned, and what criteria were used to earn it.



STACKABLE

A set of organized microcredentials can be stacked to symbolize progressive levels of proficiency, complexity, and achievement.



PORTABLE

Individuals can access their badges indefinitely and share them via social media or embed them in a resume to share with prospective or current employers or postsecondary institutions.



For Educators: GEAR UP Idaho Navigators Online Resource

GEAR UP Idaho has developed specific college and career readiness resources called “Navigators” for educators, families, and students. These are online tools available for free to all audiences. New Navigators are added regularly. All GEAR UP Idaho Navigators can be printed or used as slides during a classroom activity. Event-based navigators include printable signs and worksheets and also contain instructions for setting up or adapting events for your school.

GEAR UP Idaho Navigators include:

APPLYING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

This activity walks students through the process of seeking out and applying for scholarships. Available in English and Spanish.

CAREER PATHWAY PLAN

This resource can be used as a guide when working to create a student’s career pathway plan. Available in English and Spanish.

COLLEGE BUDGETING

This tool guides students and parents through the process of budgeting for college, covering important details like calculating an EFC and estimating the cost of attendance. A great complement to any scholarship presentation! Available in English and Spanish.

CAMPUS TOUR ACTIVITIES

This toolkit is full of ideas and activities designed to supplement and enhance a campus tour. Pick and choose from activities for students to complete before, during, and after a campus tour to help them take away the most from their experience on campus.

GREAT IDEAS GUIDE

This collection of great ideas and best practices was contributed by school counselors and college and career coordinators from across Idaho.

HALL OF REFLECTION

This event can be implemented in a variety of ways. The Hall of Reflection is designed to help students set goals and reflect on their vision for their futures.

FAMILY WELLNESS NIGHT

This event is designed to help families discuss and set goals for financial, emotional, and physical wellness.

HANDS-ON CAREER FAIR TOOLKIT

A resource designed to make career fair prep, setup, and implementation as easy as possible for teachers and counselors working with students to explore their options for their futures.

PARENT TOOLKIT

Created to help guide parents in supporting their students through their first year of college. The workbook can be done on their own however it is accompanied by a facilitator guide to assist school counselors or community leaders in setting up workshops for parents.

To access resources visit sde.idaho.gov/student-engagement/cc-readiness and click on the GEAR UP Idaho Navigator you are interested in.

Other College & Career Exploration Resources

CTE PROGRAMS DIRECTORY

Career Technical Education (CTE) programs provide hands-on learning opportunities aligned with careers right here in Idaho. Using the CTE Programs Directory on the Next Steps Idaho website, students can browse programs across the state and filter by the program area that interests them, a career cluster they want to pursue, the school they attend or their region, and the course level they need.

nextsteps.idaho.gov/cte-program-directory

Idaho Digital Skills

IdahoDigitalSkills.org offers Idahoans free access to online learning tools to increase their digital skills. Whether you're learning how to use a mouse or applying for jobs online, there are a variety of tools and resources available. IdahoDigitalSkills.org was created for Idahoans to more easily identify resources that support them in their digital work and life.

idahodigitalskills.org

Learning Blade via the Idaho STEM Action Center

Learning Blade is a system of interactive online lessons, teacher lesson plans, and printable at-home activities for 5th to 9th graders, where students learn about STEM and Computer Science careers while reviewing academics.

stem.idaho.gov/apply/learning-blade

Soft Skills Training Modules

The Workforce Development Council (WDC) is excited to share these interactive soft skills trainings presented by Idaho Digital Learning Alliance in partnership with the Idaho WDC. The modules are designed to help students gain important employment skills that will increase their chance of finding a job and help students climb the career ladder.

wdc.idaho.gov/resource-hub/#outreachmaterials

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the future is...



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DIRECT ADMISSIONS



IDAHO

Campus Choice

Idaho's public colleges and universities are reserving several thousand seats for your students! All Idaho public high school graduates will be accepted at a minimum of 6 in-state colleges the term after they graduate. Students with GPAs or ISAT scores at or above an agreed upon benchmark have even MORE options with a total of six (6) and eight (8) in-state colleges saving them a spot.

Students still need to apply to notify their chosen institution that they want to attend.

Idaho Campus Choice gives more Idahoans the opportunity to obtain a professional certificate or accredited degree. It removes barriers and encourages high school graduates to extend their training before entering the workforce.

Idaho was the first U.S. state to imagine/offer an onramp like this. Now, similar programs are being implemented across the nation.

Encourage your students to continue their education in Idaho. Here, they can gain the knowledge and skills needed to make an impact on their local community — or anywhere in the world.

Only available to Idaho high school graduates who apply to in-state institutions the semester immediately following their graduation from high school.

Over

20,000

high school seniors are sent
an Idaho Campus Choice
letter each year.

Over

67%

receive the letter offering
admission to all 8 Idaho
public colleges & universities.

Interested students **MUST** complete an admission
application to the institution of their choice by June 30.

Learn more at nextsteps.idaho.gov/campus-choice

FAFSA

FAFSA stands for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

To be eligible for federal financial aid, a student must complete and submit the FAFSA each year. Completing the FAFSA is the **ONLY** way to qualify for federal grants, student loans, work study, and some scholarships!

Users must create an account, called an FSA ID, in order to complete the FAFSA. The FSA ID allows you to sign your FAFSA form electronically.

Important Financial Aid Dates

- The 2026-27 FAFSA will open October 1, 2025
- Be aware that each institution may have unique priority deadlines
- Deadline to submit a FAFSA for the Idaho Opportunity Scholarship is March 1

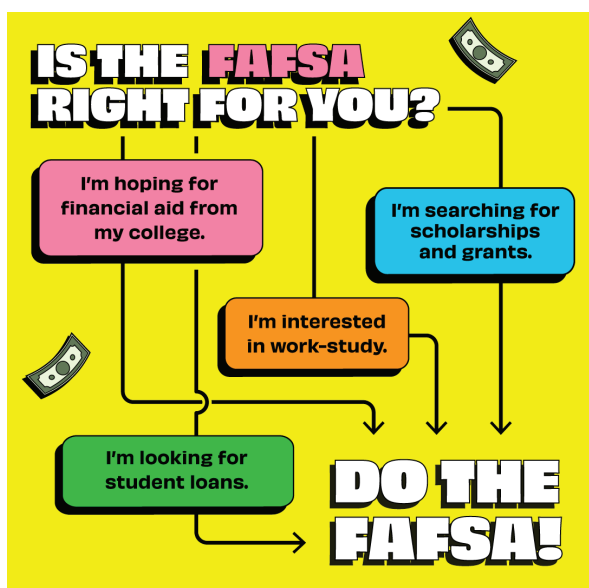
As of July 2025, 41.4% Idaho Seniors from the Class of 2025 completed a FAFSA application.

To create a FSA ID, visit studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch

To complete the FAFSA form, visit studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa

Find Financial Aid and FAFSA tools here: nextsteps.idaho.gov/educator#curriculum-resources

Financial Aid Estimator - Help families obtain an estimated SAI before the form opens or to practice the process with younger students: studentaid.gov/aid-estimator/



AmeriCorps and Peace Corps As Postsecondary Options

AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps are two options to gain useful employment experience while adding value to communities across the country or around the world. Volunteers with these organizations provide critical aid after disasters, build capacity at local nonprofits or government entities, support education and economic empowerment, maintain natural areas, improve public health, mitigate climate change, and take on countless other challenges.

AmeriCorps and Peace Corps positions are unpaid, but people who serve with these organizations receive living stipends, training opportunities, and other supports. AmeriCorps members also earn a Segal education award at the end of their service. AmeriCorps service positions serve within the United States and vary in length from a few months up to a year, while Peace Corps positions are international and last for two years, providing a range of options for service.

Peace Corps volunteers serve outside the United States at locations across the globe, including sites in Central and South America, the Caribbean, North and South Africa, Eastern Europe, Central and East Asia, and across many Pacific islands. Volunteers receive a living stipend for the duration of their service term, allowing them to live within their local community. In their two-year service positions, volunteers support critical projects while also learning from their new community, creating positive relationships that span cultures and borders.

AmeriCorps members serve within the United States and have a long history of providing needed support, from the service members helping to alleviate poverty in the 1960s to those who provided aid at Ground Zero after 9/11. No matter the need, AmeriCorps members get the job done. Each member also receives a range of benefits for the duration of their service term. These benefits include a living stipend, loan deferment, professional development and training, and a Segal education award, which can be applied to repay loans or cover educational expenses. Roughly 200,000 Americans serve their communities each year through AmeriCorps, creating a broad network of alumni.

AmeriCorps links:

Learn More about AmeriCorps

americorps.gov

Discover AmeriCorps Benefits

americorps.gov/members-volunteers/your-benefits

Learn About AmeriCorps' Service Branches

americorps.gov/serve/americorps

Choose a Service Branch

americorps.gov/serve/fit-finder

Peace Corps Links:

Learn More about the Peace Corps

peacecorps.gov

Learn about Peace Corps Benefits

peacecorps.gov/volunteer/benefits

View the Peace Corps' Major Goals

peacecorps.gov/about/global-initiatives

Discover Service Locations:

peacecorps.gov/countries

CONTACTS

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now is the time



State Agency & Programs Contacts List

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Training Provider Contact Information

160 Driving Academy

(208) 213-7837

Academy of Cosmetology

(208) 457-9094

Accelerated Training Institute

(844) 811-3907

American Institute of Clinical Massage

(208) 773-5890

Assist to Succeed Dental Assisting School

(208) 938-8228

Austin Kade Academy

(208) 346-7300

Aveda Institute Boise

(208) 544-4678

Aveda Institute Twin Falls

(208) 644-8582

Boise Barber College

(208) 378-9933

Boise State University

Admissions (208) 426-1156

Financial Aid (208) 426-1664

Registrar (208) 426-4249

Boise State University - Workforce Training

(208) 426-2489

Brigham Young University - Idaho

Admissions (208) 496-1330

Financial Aid (208) 496-1411

Registrar (208) 496-1411

Build the Best Institute

(208) 936-7319

Carrington College

(208) 779-3100

Esthetics Academy DBA (Certification Training Academy, LLC)

(707) 727-7710

CODEWORKS LLC

(208) 391-5056

Coding Clarified

(833) 633-2633

College of Eastern Idaho

Admissions (208) 535-5390

Financial Aid (208) 524-3000 X 7

Registrar (208) 535-5665

College of Eastern Idaho - Workforce Training

(208) 535-5345

College of Idaho

Admissions (208) 459-5305

Financial Aid (208) 459-5380

Registrar (208) 459-5400

College of Massage Therapy

(208) 785-3823

College of Southern Idaho

Admissions (208) 732-6221
Financial Aid (208) 732-6250
Registrar (208) 732-6272

**College of Southern Idaho –
Workforce Training**

(208) 732-6310

College of Western Idaho

Admissions (208) 562-3000
Financial Aid (208) 562-3000
Registrar (208) 562-3000

**College of Western Idaho –
Workforce Training**

(208) 562-2700

**Commercial Driver
School Lewiston**

(888) 742-7967

**Commercial Driver School
Twin Falls**

(208) 944-0001

**Cosmetology School of Arts
& Sciences**

(208) 678-4454

Eagle Gate College

(801) 734-9367

Eastern Idaho Electrical JATC

(208) 232-4300

Evans Hairstyling College

(208) 359-8141

**Headmasters School of Hair Design –
Coeur d’Alene**

(208) 457-9094

**Headmasters School of Hair Design –
Lewiston**

(208) 743-1512

Idaho CDL Training

(208) 258-3515

Idaho CPR Plus

(208) 614-2258

Idaho Dental Assisting Academy

(208) 318-8187

Idaho Medical Academy

(208) 996-9248

Idaho Rural Water Association

(208) 343-7001

Idaho State University

Admissions (208) 282-2475
Financial Aid (208) 282-2756
Registrar (208) 282-2661

**Idaho State University –
Workforce Training**

(208) 282-3372

**Independent Electrical Contractors
of Idaho (IEC Idaho)**

(208) 608-4662

Infinity School of Massage

(208) 536-9940

LeapFox Learning

(208) 898-9036

Lewis-Clark State College

Admissions (208) 792-2378
Financial Aid (208) 792-2224
Registrar (208) 792-2223

**Lewis-Clark State College
Workforce Training**

(208) 792-2388

McCall College

(208) 634-3456

Medical Career Academy

(208) 506-2142

MindMatters

(208) 327-0768

Nathan Layne Institute of Cosmetology

(208) 232-9170

North Idaho College

Admissions (208) 769-3311

Financial Aid (208) 769-3311

Registrar (208) 769-3311

North Idaho College - Workforce Training

(208) 769-3333

North Idaho Dental Personnel

(208) 770-9682

Northwest Lineman College

(208) 888-4817

Northwest Nazarene University

Admissions (208) 467-8472

Financial Aid (208) 467-8347

Registrar (208) 467-8548

Oliver Finley Academy of Cosmetology

(208) 658-1115

Paul Mitchell the School

Boise (208) 375-0190

Coeur d'Alene (208) 901-8030

Nampa (208) 287-4060

Rexburg (208) 701-2617

Twin Falls (208) 287-4075

Plumbers & Pipefitters SW Idaho JATC

(208) 288-1296

Pocatello & SE Idaho Sheet Metal Workers JATC

(208) 390-1783

Premiere Aesthetics

(208) 229-7546

Prime Line Academy

(208) 679-5463

Pro-Weld Welding School

(208) 249-4911

Ram CDL

(208) 590-1768

Rexburg College of Massage Therapy

(208) 419-3149

S&P CDL Training LLC

(208) 320-8500

Sage Truck Driving School

Blackfoot (717) 260-2099

Caldwell (208) 454-1209

Coeur d'Alene (208) 991-9998

Idaho Falls (986) 999-4762

SE Idaho Plumbers & Pipefitters JATC

(208) 288-1296

South East Idaho Dental Assisting

(208) 881-2685

Southwest Central Idaho Sheet Metal JATC

(509) 545-8340

Swift Driving Academy

(208) 746-0178

The Salon Professional Academy

(208) 465-7660

Top Gun Trucking Academy

(208) 735-6656

Treasure Valley Community College Caldwell

(208) 454-9911

University of Idaho

Admissions (208) 885-6326

Financial Aid (208) 885-6312

Registrar (208) 885-6731

Vogue Beauty School

(208) 523-2520

Western Governors University

Admissions (877) 435-7948 X 3147

Financial Aid (877) 435-7948 X 3105

Registrar (877) 435-7948 X 3105





NOTES

think big

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IDAHO **LAUNCH**

nextsteps.idaho.gov/LAUNCH



nextsteps.idaho.gov

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