



2026-2027

PARENT PLAYBOOK

Helping Students Navigate Their Next Steps

FIND YOUR THING



SPONSORED BY

**IDAHO
LAUNCH**



To our valued Idaho parents,

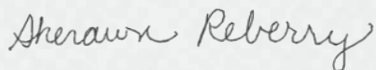
We see you. We see the early mornings and late nights you've put in over the years to be there for your student. We know how hard you've worked to help them thrive, from their first steps, to now, their next steps after high school.

To support you and your student with postsecondary planning, we're excited to share this Parent Playbook with you. Inside, you'll find resources that make preparing for life after high school easier and hopefully, even a bit fun.

The programs covered here meet students where they are, and are especially designed to support students and families who may be navigating this process for the first time. Everyone deserves to know they have options to build their future.

Thank you for all you do for your student. Together we are strengthening our communities and Idaho's workforce.

With sincere gratitude,



Sherawn Reberry

Idaho Workforce Development Council
Education & Careers Bureau Chief



WORKING OUT WHAT'S NEXT

Most of us have, at some point in our lives, asked: Who am I, where am I going, and how do I get there? While the journey can feel daunting, there is a wealth of resources to help — it's just a matter of connecting to them. To make that part easier, we created this guide for you and your student as they plan their next steps after high school. The big takeaway? There are more options and financial support than many students realize.

THE ROADMAP

GO ON: COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS 6

Explore four of the postsecondary pathways students can take after high school.

WAYS TO PAY: FINANCIAL AID & SCHOLARSHIPS 16

Get a breakdown of financial support options to figure out which may be the best fit for each student.

HOW TO GET THERE: TOOLS & RESOURCES 36

Discover tools and resources that make postsecondary planning easier.

NOTES

Space to jot down important information.



GO ON: COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

MAPPING THE FUTURE

As your student makes choices for their future, this guide shows the possibilities. Whether they're interested in working right away or going the technical training, community college, or four-year university route, you can use this information to help them know that the only 'right' path after high school is what's best for them.

*makin' moves
my way*



Featured Resources

CTE Programs Directory → **page 38**

Browse and filter career and technical education.
nextsteps.idaho.gov/cte-program-directory

IDCTE Website → **page 42**

The Idaho Division of Career and Technical Education connects learners with hands-on education, training programs, and more.
cte.idaho.gov

Career Technical & Workforce Training

Career Technical Education (CTE) can include trade schools, apprenticeships, and workforce training that prepares students for specialized jobs like welding, electrical work, or technical trades. They are usually much shorter than college or university pathways, so students can go right into the workforce. Some can even be completed within a few months. The Workforce Readiness CTE Diploma allows students to get technical training while they're still in high school (see page 44).

What it can look like: Electrician apprenticeships, lineman college, dental assistant, commercial photography.



WHO IT'S FOR:

Students who enjoy hands-on learning and want to jump into a career quickly after high school with specialized skills and focused training.



WAYS TO PAY:

Students can get up to \$8,000 for postsecondary training with Idaho LAUNCH. Advanced Opportunities can help with training while students are still in high school. In apprenticeships, students usually earn money and benefits while completing their training. Employer-sponsored funding may also be available.



Public and private school students can use the Advanced Opportunities program for funding toward educational and career pathways during high school. See more on page 28.



Featured Resources

College & University Directory → **page 38**

Explore college and university options across the U.S.
nextsteps.idaho.gov/college-and-universities-directory

Apply Idaho → **page 41**

Apply to up to 10 schools with one free application.
nextsteps.idaho.gov/apply-idaho

Postsecondary Education

College & University

From certificates to four-year programs and doctorate degrees, students can pursue their passions at colleges and universities across Idaho and the country. This path offers students the chance to keep learning in an educational setting, pursue advanced degrees, conduct research, and choose areas of specialization.

What it can look like: Bachelor of Arts in film and television at Boise State University; Master of Science in geology at the University of Idaho.



WHO IT'S FOR:

Students who want to keep learning in a traditional educational setting — with opportunities to pursue an advanced degree, conduct research alongside professors (sometimes in the field), and even travel abroad.



WAYS TO PAY:

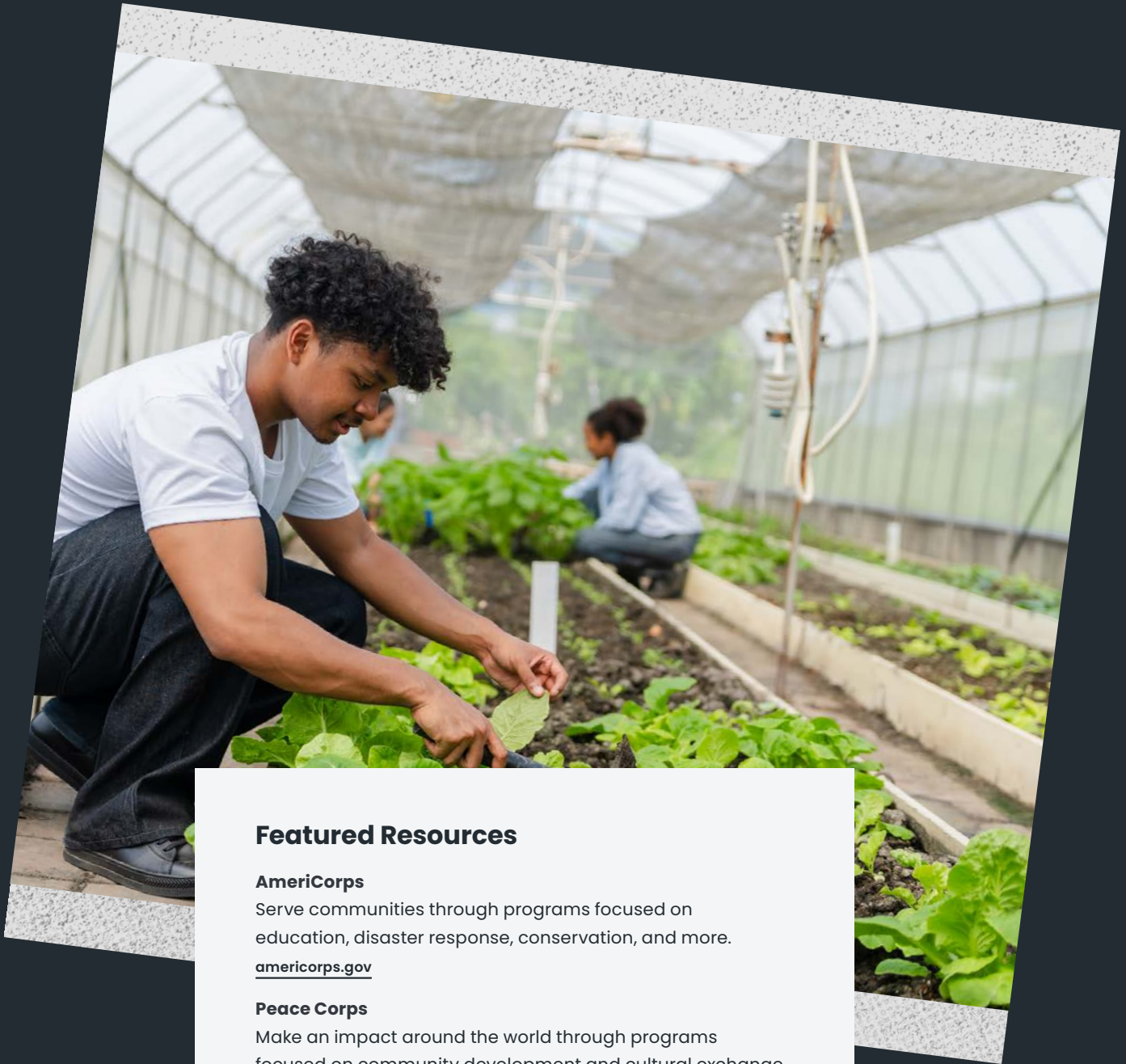
Students can use scholarships, grants, and loans to help pay for college. Many qualify for more than they think. Idaho has funding available for students planning to attend an in-state school. Review Idaho grants and scholarships like Idaho LAUNCH.

What's the difference?

Colleges are usually smaller than universities and offer two- and four-year programs. Universities often offer more research opportunities and continued learning, such as master's and doctorate programs. Both can be public or private. This guide simplifies language to use "college" for both.



Public and private school students can use the Advanced Opportunities program for funding toward educational and career pathways during high school. See more on page 28.



Featured Resources

AmeriCorps

Serve communities through programs focused on education, disaster response, conservation, and more.

americorps.gov

Peace Corps

Make an impact around the world through programs focused on community development and cultural exchange.

peacecorps.gov

Service-Based Learning

After graduation, students can serve communities all over the country and the world while gaining work experience. The length of service can vary depending on the program. AmeriCorps can last a month to a year, while the Peace Corps is a two-year commitment. Roles are unpaid, but members receive a living stipend and sometimes an award to use for future education.

What it can look like: *Creating a community garden as an AmeriCorps member; teaching in Thailand as a Peace Corps volunteer.*



WHO IT'S FOR:

Students who want an immersive, hands-on work experience in a community while potentially seeing different parts of the country or world.

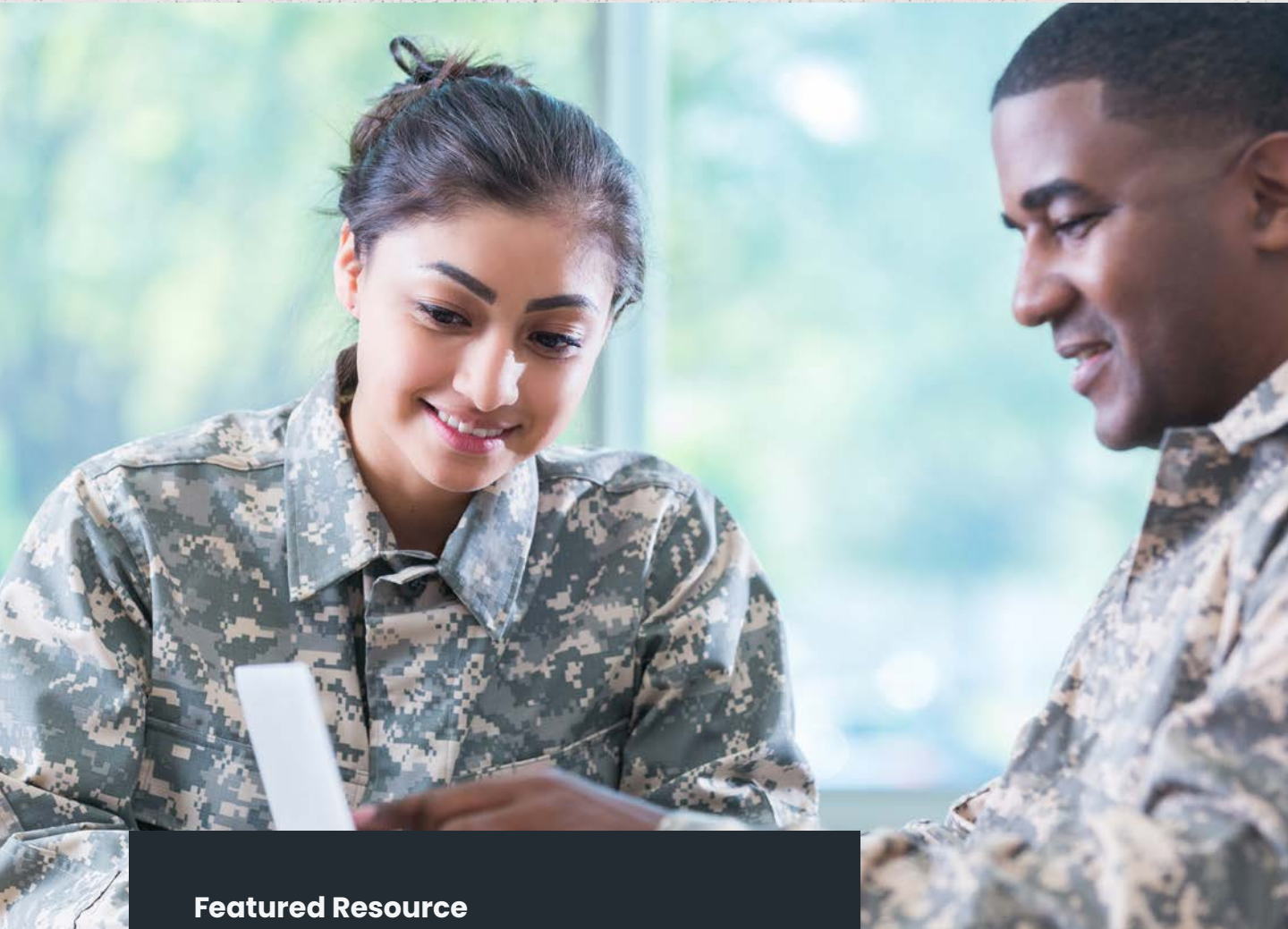


WAYS TO PAY:

Service-based work experiences like AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps are free. You'll earn a living stipend and other benefits during your term of service.



Students entering AmeriCorps or Peace Corps may qualify for an extension on grant funding like Idaho LAUNCH. See page 23 for how to apply for an Idaho LAUNCH extension.



Featured Resource

Military Careers Pathways

Explore branch pathways, job opportunities and requirements, and education benefits.

nextsteps.idaho.gov/resources/military-careers

Military Service

Students can get training that provides physical and mental challenges, hands-on learning, and areas of specialization, with the potential to make a lifelong career, gain job skills, travel, and earn money for education. With five military branches, plus two additional service paths, each offers a different role in serving our country. To join, all branches require the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and a high school diploma or GED. There's also a physical exam and fitness test.

What it can look like: *Earning your college degree as part of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC); cyber operations specialist with the National Guard; construction supervisor with the Air Force.*



WHO IT'S FOR:

Students who want to challenge themselves physically and mentally, see other parts of the world, and gain real-world experience and job skills while serving their country.



WAYS TO PAY:

There is no cost to enlist in the US military. Students will earn a paycheck or stipend during their service. Students can receive help paying for college through Military Service or ROTC, learn more on page 35.

Career Support for Kids of Military Parents & 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 program is designed to help students take their education and career to the next level.

idahoveterans.org | (208) 917-9977 | admin@idahoveterans.org



Students entering the military may qualify for an extension on grant funding like Idaho LAUNCH. See page 23 for how to apply for an Idaho LAUNCH extension.



WAYS TO PAY: FINANCIAL AID & SCHOLARSHIPS

MONEY MOVES

When it comes to money, everyone has a different idea. Many families don't apply for financial aid because they don't think they'll qualify. Thankfully, that's not usually true. Financial assistance is within reach. Read on to see types of financial aid, then learn more about special programs to help Idaho students pay for postsecondary education and training.

GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Free money for students to pursue their dreams! Scholarships and grants do not have to be repaid as long as awardees continue meeting the requirements. Students can earn scholarships based on merit, talent, need, community service, leadership, or other factors.

Idaho LAUNCH	18
Idaho Opportunity Scholarship	24
Advanced Opportunities	28
Other Idaho State Scholarships	30
Workforce Pell — Coming 2027!	

LOANS & WORK STUDY

Each college issues a financial aid package, which may include loans, scholarships, grants, and work study. Loans must be repaid, usually with interest, while work study allows students to earn money by working part-time at their college. Private loans are also available, but tend to have higher interest rates.

MORE FINANCIAL OPTIONS

From accessing federal aid to savings plans and other opportunities, there are more ways to make postsecondary education more affordable.

FAFSA	32
IDeal - Idaho Education Savings Program	34
Military Service	35

It pays to start early.

IDAHO LAUNCH

→ PRIORITY DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 30

→ DEADLINE: APRIL 15

Idaho LAUNCH gives students money for what's next after high school. Trade or technical. Two-year or four-year. It's their call. The program prepares students for Idaho's future workforce needs by paying for 80% of in-state education and training programs up to \$8,000.

How much money is awarded?

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. Students must use funds within three years unless granted an extension (See FAQ on page 23 for details).

Approximately **\$75 million** is available annually, enough for almost **10,000 awards**.

Before accepting a final award, students should review program and eligibility details to avoid being required to repay the funds. These are rare, but important to understand. See details on page 21.

Key Dates



APPLYING

- APPLICATION OPENS: OCT 1
- PRIORITY DEADLINE: NOV 30
- FINAL DEADLINE: APR 15



ACCEPTING AWARD

- ACCEPT CONTINGENT AWARD OFFER: DEC-APR (WITHIN 2 WEEKS OF NOTIFICATION)
- ACCEPT FINAL OFFER & SUBMIT DOCUMENTATION: MAY 31
- UPLOAD DIPLOMA OR TRANSCRIPT: JUN 30
- ENROLL: FALL 2027



Students can be awarded the Idaho LAUNCH grant or Idaho Opportunity Scholarship, but not both. Get help deciding which is right on page 27.


[Learn More](https://nextsteps.idaho.gov/launch)
nextsteps.idaho.gov/launch



Instructions for Students: How to Apply

01. Make sure you're eligible

- ✓ Be a graduate from the current high school graduating class of an Idaho public school, charter school, private school, home school, or GED program (and under the age of 21 by April 15 of the current year).
- ✓ Be an Idaho resident.
- ✓ Be enrolled in or have applied to an eligible Idaho institution.
- ✓ Begin enrollment by fall semester after graduation.
- ✓ Complete a Career Pathway Plan by May 31 through the Next Steps Idaho dashboard. Talk to your counselor if your school has a different method of selection.

02. Explore career options

Look over in-demand careers in Idaho or take a quiz to see what job works for you. Visit nextsteps.idaho.gov/browse-careers

03. Find a program and provider

Find an approved Idaho LAUNCH program and training provider that fit where you want to go. Check the updated provider and program list at nextsteps.idaho.gov/launch

04. Apply on Scholarship Idaho

Set up an account and apply at scholarships.idaho.gov. Use your personal email address, not your school email, to make sure you get updates from LAUNCH.





Instructions for Students: Accepting Your Award

Accepting your offer → CONTINGENT AWARD

You'll receive this if you apply and are on track to meet the eligibility requirements. It's "contingent" because you still have to graduate and verify you've met the requirements before the official award is given.

01. Wait for updates

Watch your inbox for updates, clarifications about your application, and notice of your award status from Scholarship Idaho. Add this email to your safe list (scholarshiphelp@edu.idaho.gov) to make sure you don't miss award emails.

02. Accept offer

Accept the contingent award within two weeks of receiving your notification. If you don't respond, your award may be offered to another candidate.

Accepting your offer → FINAL AWARD

Congratulations! If you still meet the requirements, you'll receive the physical award letter in May, along with an email to your personal email address. It includes important instructions to verify your information and upload the required documentation in the Idaho Grant Management System.

03. Stay on track and watch for your final award letter in May

After April 15, check your email often for your final offer letter and instructions on where and how to accept. Add launchadmin@wdc.idaho.gov to your safe list so you don't miss your final award offer.

04. Accept offer & submit documentation by May 31

Go to the Idaho Grant Management System to upload your final documents (identity, residency, and Career Pathway Plan), and accept your final offer.

05. Upload graduation documents by June 30

Upload your diploma or transcript to the Idaho Grant Management System to show you graduated.

06. Receive your funds

Funding will go directly to the program in which you're enrolled.



Use the Idaho Grant Management System to track your award. This is where you will update information and review your remaining award amount.

Avoid Idaho LAUNCH Grant Repayment

Before accepting a final award, 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 repay funds.

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



Frequently Asked Questions

Is this just for high school students?

Idaho LAUNCH began as a program for adult learners, and with its success, the state of Idaho created LAUNCH for high school seniors. Learn more about the adult program at launch.idaho.gov

Do students need to go to college to get Idaho LAUNCH?

Nope! There are 1,000+ non-traditional programs available for Idaho LAUNCH.

Is there a GPA requirement?

Nope! But students do need to graduate high school to be eligible (or equivalent home school or GED).

Are students required to fill out a FAFSA?

Nope! The FAFSA is not required for this grant. However, students may choose to complete the FAFSA and apply for other financial aid to pay remaining program costs.

Can students get an extension to use their Idaho LAUNCH grant?

Yes! The following reasons may qualify for an extension: religious service, military service, structured volunteer service with AmeriCorps or Peace Corps, health or medical issues, incarceration, or a program not available in the fall semester. Review details on nextsteps.idaho.gov/LAUNCH — click “Request an Extension.” For all other students, training programs must begin in the fall following high school graduation.

What programs can students pay for with LAUNCH?

Idaho community college courses, commercial driver’s license training, apprenticeships, other workforce training programs, and colleges and universities. It just has to be an Idaho approved program on the list. Go to nextsteps.idaho.gov/LAUNCH for the full list of eligible programs.

Example Program Costs

PROGRAM	TOTAL COST	AMOUNT PAID FOR BY LAUNCH	REMAINING AMOUNT TO BE PAID
Workforce Training Program	\$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)	\$5,000	\$4,000	\$1,000
Apprenticeship Program (4-year)	\$10,000	\$8,000	\$2,000
Private Trade School Program	\$18,000	\$8,000	\$10,000

Actual costs will depend 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 Opportunity Scholarship



→ **DEADLINE: MARCH 1**

Idaho Opportunity Scholarship provides up to \$3,500 per academic year for Idaho students attending an eligible Idaho college. Awards are based on a combination of need (based on the FAFSA) and merit (GPA). Many students receive this scholarship who do not qualify for any other need-based aid, so they should apply even if they are not eligible for the Pell Grant.

How Much Is Awarded

Each student can get up to \$3,500 per academic year, renewable for up to four years, up to \$14,000 total. The number of scholarships offered is based on how much funding is available each year. Award amounts vary because this is a “last dollars” award to assist in filling in the gap in cost of attendance after other scholarships and grants.

Eligible Idaho Colleges

- ✓ College of Eastern Idaho
- ✓ College of Southern Idaho
- ✓ College of Western Idaho
- ✓ Boise State University
- ✓ Brigham Young University – Idaho
- ✓ Idaho State University
- ✓ Lewis-Clark State College
- ✓ Northwest Nazarene University
- ✓ North Idaho College
- ✓ The College of Idaho
- ✓ University of Idaho
- ✓ Western Governors University

Key Dates



APPLYING

- **APPLICATION OPENS: OCT 1**
- **APPLICATION & COMPLETED FAFSA DUE: MAR 1**



ACCEPTING AWARD

- **FORMAL OFFERS MADE: APR**
- **ACCEPTANCE DEADLINE: BASED ON OFFER**



Learn More

nextsteps.idaho.gov/scholarship-idaho



Students can be awarded the Idaho LAUNCH grant or Idaho Opportunity Scholarship, but not both. Get help deciding which is right on page 27.



Instructions for Students: How to Apply

01. Make sure you're eligible

- ✓ Have or will graduate from an Idaho high school, home school, or equivalent (GED/HSE from Idaho).
- ✓ Be an Idaho resident.
- ✓ Have an unweighted, cumulative GPA of at least 2.7.
- ✓ Begin enrollment by fall semester after graduation.
- ✓ Must pursue a certificate, first associate's degree, or first bachelor's degree.
- ✓ Maintain satisfactory academic standing as specified in program rules.

02. Complete the FAFSA

Complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by March 1. See page 32.

03. Apply on Scholarship Idaho

Set up an account and apply at scholarships.idaho.gov. Use your personal email address, not your school email, to make sure you get updates from Scholarship Idaho.



Instructions for Students: Accepting Your Award

01. Wait for updates

Watch your inbox for updates, clarifications about your application, and notice of your award status from Scholarship Idaho. Add this email to your safe list (scholarshiphelp@edu.idaho.gov) to make sure you don't miss award emails.

02. Accept offer

Accept the award within the timeframe mentioned in your offer. If you don't respond, your award may be offered to another candidate.

03. Stay on track

Graduate and maintain eligibility requirements (like a 2.7+ GPA).

04. Receive your funds

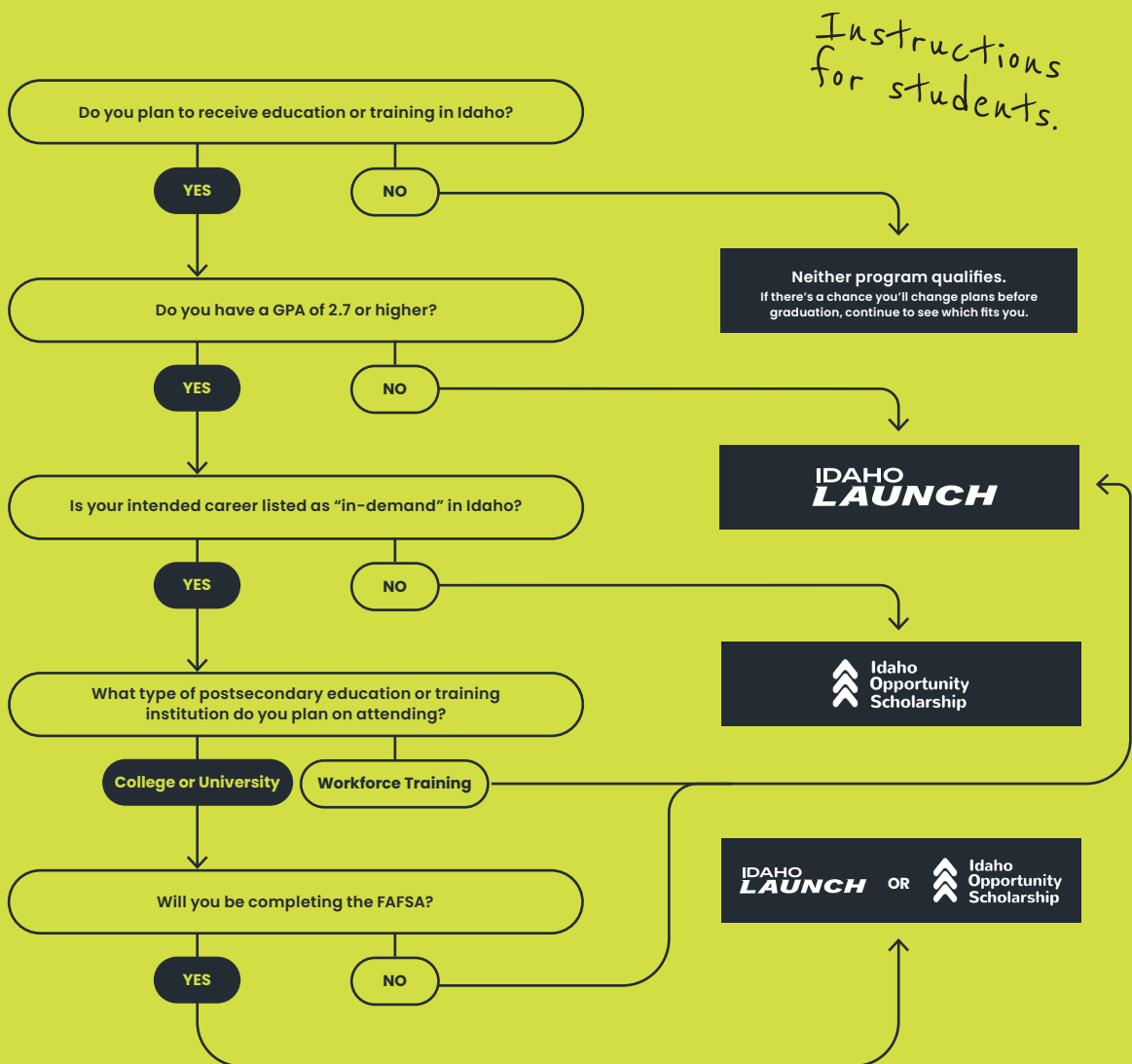
Funding will be awarded by the program or training institution (usually in the summer, but sometimes not until September) in which you're enrolled.



Idaho LAUNCH vs. Idaho Opportunity Scholarship

Which one is right for me?

You can get either the Idaho LAUNCH grant or the Idaho Opportunity Scholarship, but not both. Take this quiz to find out which might be best for you.



Advanced Opportunities



Advanced Opportunities gives middle and high school students a jump start on their future with funds to help pay for overload courses, dual credits, exams, workforce training, or early graduation. Students must be in grades 7–12, attending an Idaho public or private school. Each student can receive up to **\$4,625** over the course of their education. Last year, we awarded over **\$28 million** to help nearly **45,000** students across dual credit (**\$23.8 million**), exams (**\$1.8 million**), overload courses (**\$2.3 million**), and workforce training (**\$162,000**).

What It Pays For

Overload Courses

Courses taken outside 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

College courses 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

Workforce Training Courses

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

Exams

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

Early Graduation Scholarship

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

Key Dates

TERM	FUNDING REQUEST WINDOW*	VERIFICATION DEADLINE	SUBMISSION DEADLINE
Fall 2026 Trimester 1	April 1 – October 9, 2026	November 13, 2026	November 20, 2026
Spring 2027 Trimester 2	November 16 – March 5, 2027	May 7, 2027	Courses: May 21, 2027 Exams: May 28, 2027
Spring 2027 Trimester 3	February 15 – April 2, 2027	May 7, 2027	Courses: May 21, 2027 Exams: May 28, 2027

*Student Access window may vary by district, please contact your school or district office for local dates. All funding requests are to be made by the funding request window deadline.



Learn More

nextsteps.idaho.gov/resources/ao

How to Apply & Use Advanced Opportunities

Create An Account

Students should create an Advanced Opportunities account at advancedops.sde.idaho.gov. Creating an account will allow them 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. 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 & 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 & 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 with information on how credits will be accepted. Visit coursetransfer.idaho.gov for transferability.

Armed Forces & Public Service Officer Dependent Scholarship

→ FALL DEADLINE: JUL 1

→ SPRING DEADLINE: DEC 1

→ SUMMER DEADLINE: APR 15

The Armed Forces and Public Safety Officer Dependent Scholarship is awarded to dependents of fallen or permanently disabled (to the point of unemployable) members of the armed forces or public safety officers. The scholarship provides a waiver of tuition and fees, up to \$750 per semester for books, and on-campus housing and subsistence to qualifying Idaho undergraduate students.

For details, contact the state Scholarships Program Manager, Joy Miller, at jmiller@edu.idaho.gov

GEAR UP Idaho Scholarship

→ DEADLINE: ONGOING

The GEAR UP Idaho Scholarship is awarded to Idaho residents who graduated from an eligible Idaho high school and participated in a GEAR UP Idaho program.

There are even more scholarships available.

Don't stop here! There are 100+ scholarships available just for Idaho students and 12,000+ nationwide.

nextsteps.idaho.gov/scholarships-directory

Idaho Governor's Cup Scholarships

→ **ACADEMIC DEADLINE: MARCH 1**

→ **CTE DEADLINE: APRIL 15**

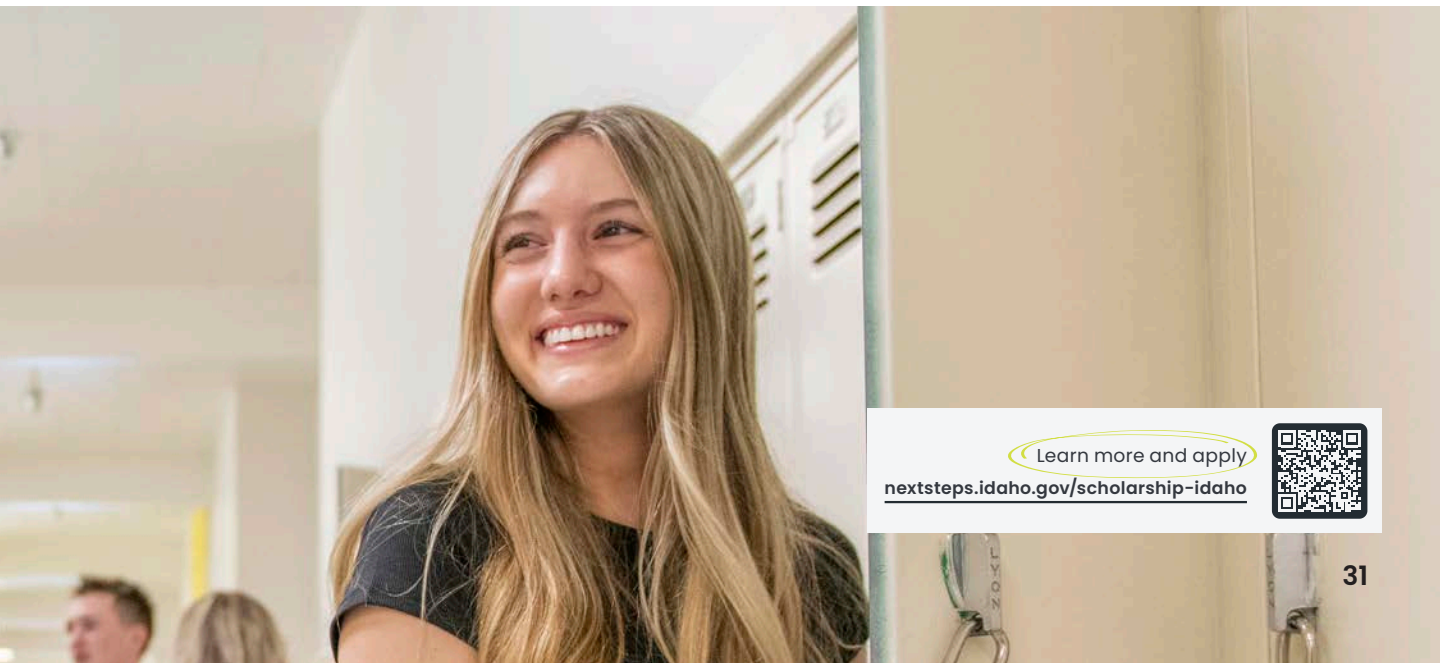
These scholarships are open to students who will graduate from an Idaho high school or home school, enrolled at an eligible Idaho college or university. Applicants must meet GPA and other eligibility requirements. High consideration is given to students who show a commitment to public service. There are two eligible categories for awards. The Governor's Cup committee is responsible for reviewing applications and making award decisions. To connect with their staff, please visit idahogovernorscup.org

ACADEMIC

- ✓ Awards up to \$5,000 per academic year.
- ✓ Applicants must have at least a 3.5 GPA.
- ✓ Renewable for up to 4 years.

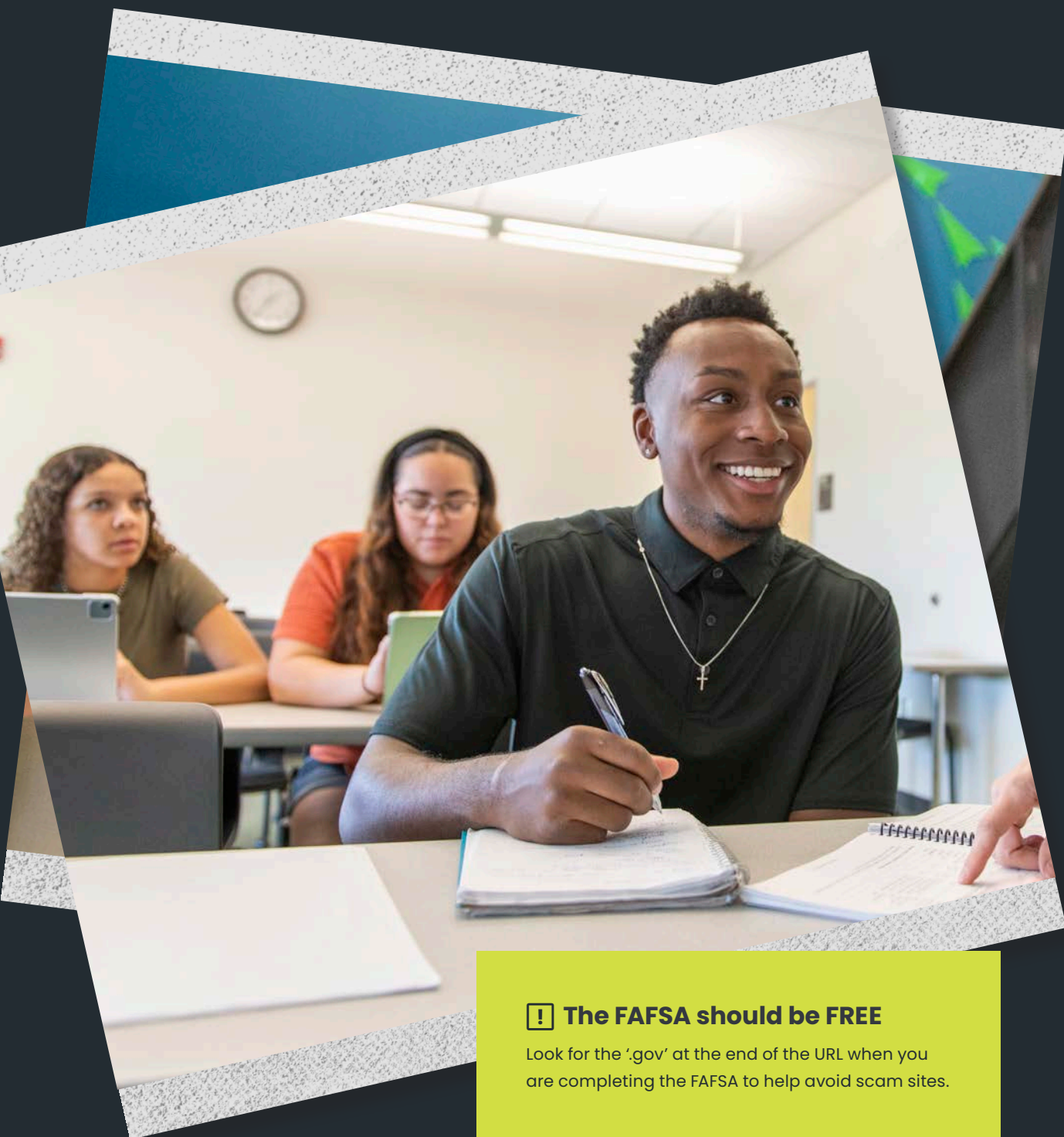
CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE)

- ✓ Awards up to \$3,000 per academic year.
- ✓ Applicants must have at least a 3.0 GPA.
- ✓ Renewable for up to 3 years.



Learn more and apply
nextsteps.idaho.gov/scholarship-idaho





! The FAFSA should be FREE

Look for the '.gov' at the end of the URL when you are completing the FAFSA to help avoid scam sites.

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

→ IDAHO DEADLINE: MARCH 1

→ NATIONAL DEADLINE: JUNE 30

College and career training programs use the FAFSA to determine how much financial aid students are eligible to receive, including grants, scholarships, work-study funds, and loans. Students must complete the FAFSA every year, but with the right information in hand, it's easy.

It pays to be early. The earlier a student applies for the FAFSA once the application opens, the more grants and scholarships they may be eligible for, as some have finite amounts. While the national FAFSA deadline is later, Idaho students should adhere to the March deadline to be eligible for Idaho funding opportunities. Students should check with the school they're planning to attend as they may have earlier deadlines.

Who Should Apply

Any student who is thinking about postsecondary education in the coming year. The FAFSA is the only way to qualify for federal grants, student loans, work study, and some scholarships.

How to Apply

- 01.** Create a FSA ID by going to studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch
- 02.** Gather your information:
 - Verified account username and password from Step 01
 - Parent or spouse contributor's email address
 - Parent or spouse contributor's name, date of birth, and Social Security Number
 - Income and asset information
- 03.** Complete the FAFSA form at studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa



Predict what you'll be eligible for using the financial aid estimator: studentaid.gov/aid-estimator

IDEal – Idaho Education Savings Program

IDEal is a tax-advantaged 529 account designed specifically to help students and families save and invest for their loved ones' postsecondary education. The Idaho 529 plan is flexible. It can be used to fund most education including:

- ✓ Two or four-year universities nationwide
- ✓ Registered apprenticeships
- ✓ Student loan repayment (up to \$20,000 per beneficiary per lifetime)
- ✓ K-12 tuition and professional certifications
(tuition only at any K-12 public, private or religious school. Limited to \$20,000 per student annually)
- ✓ Skills and career training programs

Tax Advantages

There is a state income tax deduction of up to \$6,000 for single filers per year — or \$12,000 for couples filing jointly. 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. Plus, tax-deferred earnings and tax-free withdrawals for qualified expenses.

How to Set Up An Account

- 01.** Go to idsaves.org
- 02.** Choose initial contribution amount (as low as \$25) and payment method
- 03.** Choose an investment option

Learn more at idsaves.org



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

Military Service

By enlisting in any branch of the military, students may be eligible for benefits like the GI Bill that can help pay for postsecondary education. The GI Bill can cover tuition, housing, fees, and books.

Learn more at va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits

ROTC

The Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) is a military scholarship that gives students the chance to take part in military training and education while going to college, then serve as a commissioned officer after graduation. In exchange, the military pays for your education.

Army ROTC: goarmy.com/rotc

Navy ROTC: netc.navy.mil/NSTC/NROTC/Apply/

Air Force ROTC: afrotc.com

U.S. Coast Guard

The Coast Guard doesn't have a traditional ROTC program. Students interested in becoming a Coast Guard officer have two options: apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, or wait until they're a college junior and apply to CSPI — the College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative — which offers similar scholarship benefits to ROTC.

Learn more & apply at gocoastguard.com





HOW TO GET THERE: TOOLS & RESOURCES

SUPPORT FOR EVERY PATH

Tools and resources developed by Idaho agencies and organizations to make postsecondary planning easier.

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*Now is
the time.*

Next Steps Idaho



A free resource to help students understand their options, make a plan, and take the next step after high school, all in one place. Built by the State Board of Education in partnership with Idaho's employers.

Explore Careers & Training

Discover careers that match a student's interests and values from 600+ options.

nextsteps.idaho.gov/career-and-interest-quizzes

Plan for College

Explore college and university options across the country.

nextsteps.idaho.gov/college-and-universities-directory

Browse CTE Programs

Browse and filter career and technical education programs across the state.

nextsteps.idaho.gov/cte-program-directory

Find Idaho In-Demand Careers

Browse and filter careers by eligibility for Idaho LAUNCH by graduation year.

nextsteps.idaho.gov/launch *Interactive filtering feature launching fall 2026

Get Financial Aid & Scholarships

Find ways to pay for what's next, including FAFSA help and financial aid resources.

nextsteps.idaho.gov/scholarships-directory



Learn More

nextsteps.idaho.gov



*Next Steps Idaho is here to help 24/7.
Get answers to your questions any time
with Rocket, our digital assistant.*

Scholarship Idaho



Scholarship Idaho is the free common application for Idaho scholarships and grant programs. Find and apply for many state-managed scholarships and grants in one place.

How it Works

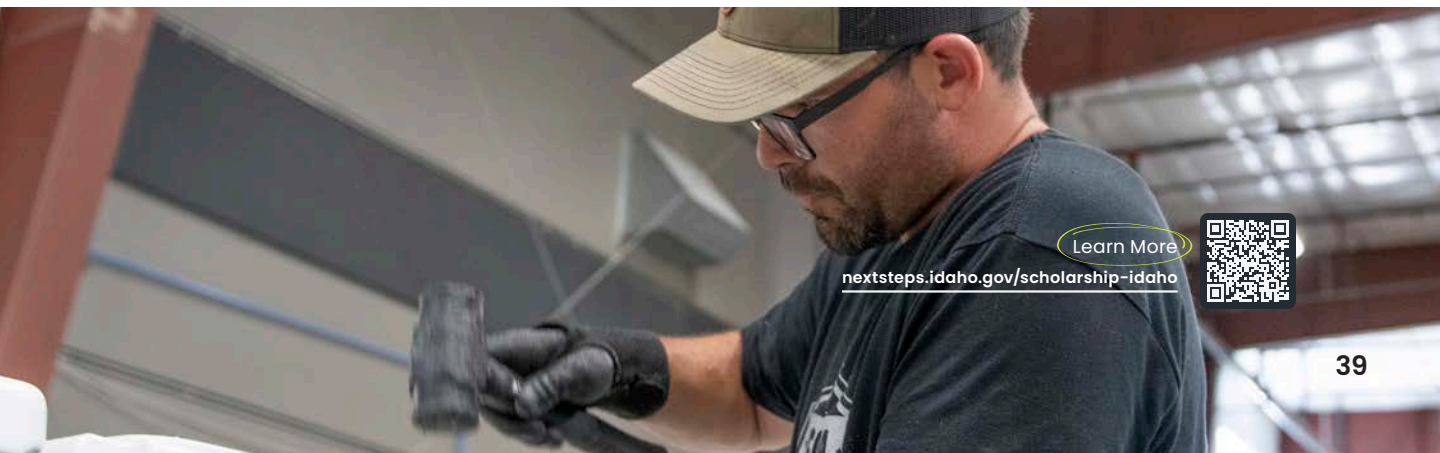
- 01.** Go to the Scholarship Idaho portal at scholarships.idaho.gov. Create an account and see which state-managed scholarships and grants you qualify for.
- 02.** Gather your personal email and Social Security Number. Check the scholarship application guide for more details: nextsteps.idaho.gov/scholarship_application-guide
- 03.** Apply at scholarships.idaho.gov

State Scholarships & Grants

- ✓ Idaho LAUNCH Grant (page 18)
- ✓ Idaho Opportunity Scholarship (page 24)
- ✓ Idaho Governor's Cup Scholarships (page 31)
- ✓ GEAR UP Idaho Scholarship (page 30)
- ✓ Armed Forces & PSO Dependent Scholarship (page 30)
- ✓ Tschudy Family Scholarship
*For graduates of Emmett High School only

Key Dates

- APPLICATIONS OPEN: OCT 1
- DEADLINES VARY. SEE EACH SCHOLARSHIP OR GRANT FOR DATES



Learn More

nextsteps.idaho.gov/scholarship-idaho



Idaho Campus Choice



Idaho's direct admissions program. This removes barriers for applying to college by automatically pre-admitting students to Idaho schools when they meet certain requirements. Additionally, there are resources for special populations, such as those on a 504 or those who have English as a second language.

How it Works

- 01.** Students must meet requirements determined by their junior year unweighted GPA and ISAT scores.
- 02.** Students receive a letter showing which colleges they are pre-admitted to, mailed each fall to seniors.
- 03.** Once they explore schools to see which is the right fit, students can apply in one place with the Apply Idaho application, apply.nextsteps.idaho.gov
- 04.** The rest of the process is similar to any other college application. Students will receive acceptance letters, and will need to accept an offer to their chosen school.

Eligible Idaho Colleges

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| ✓ University of Idaho | ✓ Idaho State University | ✓ College of Western Idaho |
| ✓ Boise State University | ✓ College of Eastern Idaho | ✓ North Idaho College |
| ✓ Lewis-Clark State College | ✓ College of Southern Idaho | |

Key Dates

→ **LETTERS ARRIVE: FALL OF SENIOR YEAR**

→ **APPLICATIONS OPEN: OCT 1**



No matter a student's status for this program, they can still apply to any Idaho college or university.



Learn More

nextsteps.idaho.gov/campus-choice

Apply Idaho



Apply Idaho is a free, common application that allows students to apply to up to 10 Idaho colleges and universities with a single application. Only available to current-year graduating Idaho high school seniors.

How it Works

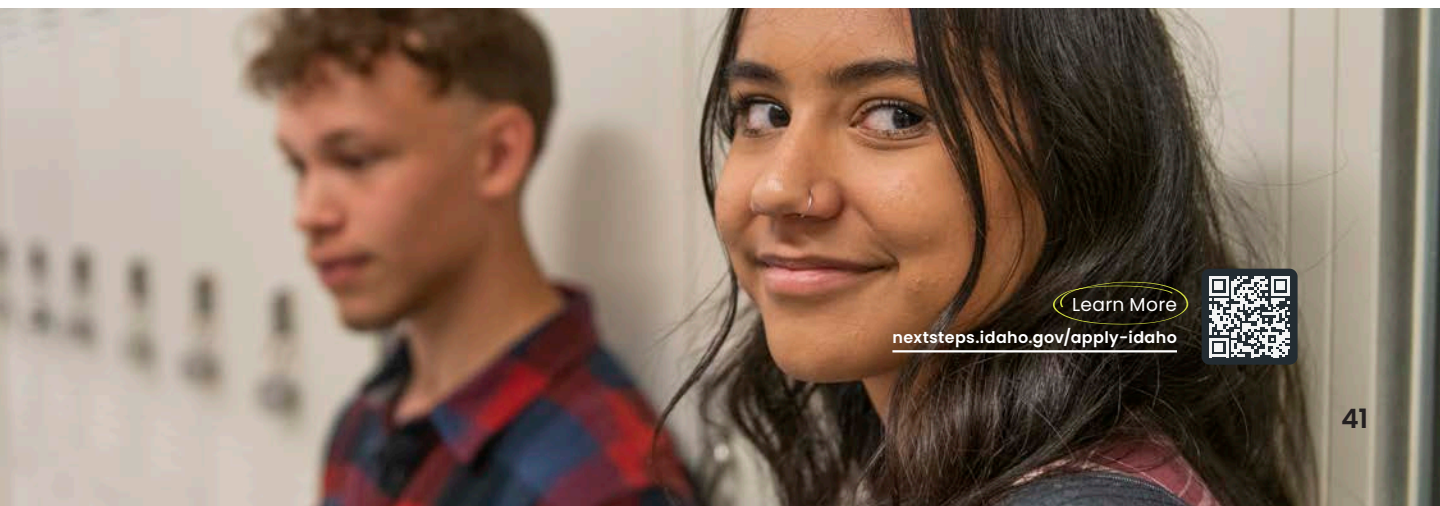
01. Research Idaho colleges using the *Next Steps Idaho College Discovery Center* (nextsteps.idaho.gov/college-and-universities-directory). Sort by "Apply Idaho" in the Admissions Process to see which schools participate.
02. Gather the information you'll need using the Apply Idaho Checklist. Download at nextsteps.idaho.gov/apply-idaho
03. Apply at apply.nextsteps.idaho.gov

Eligible Idaho Colleges

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ✓ University of Idaho | ✓ College of Eastern Idaho | ✓ The College of Idaho |
| ✓ Boise State University | ✓ College of Southern Idaho | ✓ Northwest Nazarene University |
| ✓ Lewis-Clark State College | ✓ College of Western Idaho | |
| ✓ Idaho State University | ✓ North Idaho College | |

Key Dates

- APPLICATION OPENS: OCT 1
- APPLICATION DEADLINE: JUN 30



Learn More

nextsteps.idaho.gov/apply-idaho



More Resources

Idaho Digital Skills

Free online learning tools and resources for all Idahoans to level up their digital skills. Whether they want to learn how to type faster or apply for jobs online, Idaho Digital Skills can help.

idahodigitalskills.org

Idaho Division of Career Technical Education (IDCTE)

The Idaho Division of Career and Technical Education connects learners with hands-on education, training programs, and more.

cte.idaho.gov

Jobs Explained on Idaho Public Television

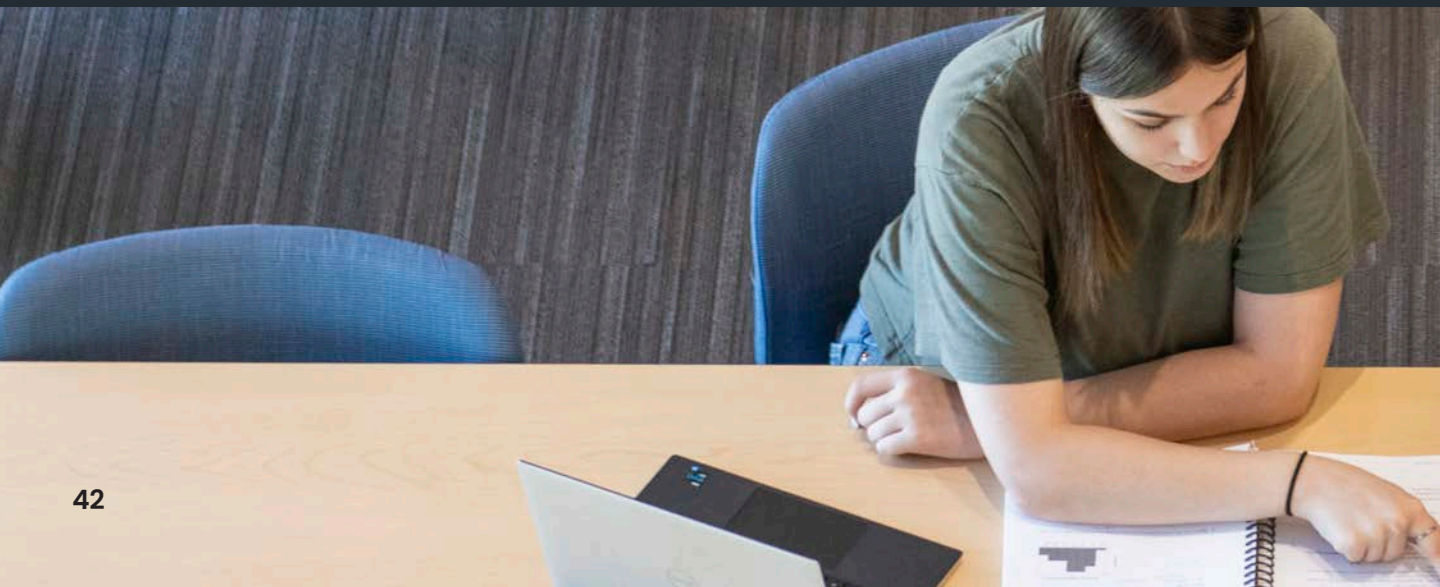
A web series that helps teens and young adults explore in-demand careers across Idaho. Host Matthew takes viewers inside real workplaces, working alongside employees and interviewing professionals at every career stage, with bonus social videos offering career advice and soft skills tips along the way.

idahoptv.org/shows/idahojobs

Rocket Chatbot

Rocket is your Idaho LAUNCH assistant for quick help with final offers, documents, deadlines, and next steps.

nextsteps.idaho.gov



Soft Skills Training Modules

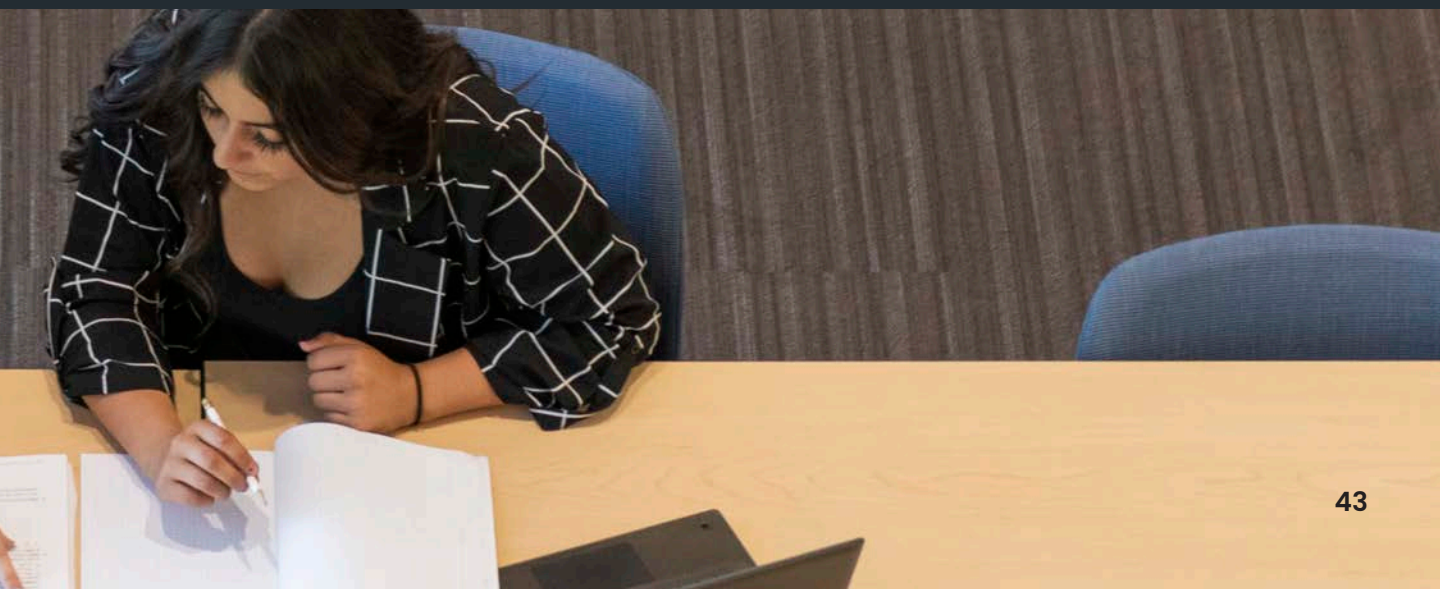
Interactive training to help students gain skills that increase their chance of finding a job and advancing their career. Made possible by the Idaho Digital Learning Alliance in partnership with The Workforce Development Council.

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

Idaho LAUNCH Grant Management System

Students are awarded the Idaho LAUNCH grant and accept their contingent award through their Scholarship Idaho account. After graduating high school or completing their GED, they'll use the Idaho Grant Management System to accept, manage, and track their final LAUNCH award. Students receive a letter and email with instructions in May of their senior year.

nextsteps.idaho.gov/launch



Special Diplomas

Workforce Readiness & Career Technical Education (CTE) Diploma

Graduates are expected to have more skills than ever before. In addition to strong academics in reading, math, and science, 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 them 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 Idaho State Legislature created the Workforce Readiness CTE Diploma.

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



Students

- ✓ Earn employer-recognized certifications and microcredentials and gain practical, real-world working experience.
- ✓ Earn college credits while still in high school.
- ✓ Develop and articulate in-demand technical and workplace skills.
- ✓ Explore Idaho's high-skill, high-demand occupations.
- ✓ Enter the world after graduation confident in their ability to do a job well.

Employers

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

How it Works

- 01.** Pass the state-approved Technical Skills Assessment (TSA).
- 02.** Pass the state-approved Workplace Readiness Assessment (WRA).
- 03.** Earn all pathway microcredentials within SkillStack® or an approved industry certification.

Learn more: cte.idaho.gov/workforce-readiness-cte-diploma



STEM Diploma

Earning a STEM diploma recognizes that a student has completed a rigorous course load in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and is ready to take their next steps in STEM.

Through the STEM Diploma, students gain a competitive advantage and signal to industry and higher education leaders that they are qualified for a STEM career path.

Learn more: stem.idaho.gov/stem-diploma



Notes

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

PROGRAM	WHAT HAPPENS	DATE
Idaho LAUNCH Apply Idaho Idaho Opportunity Scholarship	Applications open	October 1
Idaho Campus Choice	Direct admissions letters mailed to graduating seniors	Early Fall
Idaho LAUNCH	Priority application deadline	November 30
Idaho LAUNCH	Contingent offer letters sent on a rolling basis (2-week acceptance window)	December – April
Idaho Opportunity Scholarship	Application deadline (FAFSA required)	March 1
Idaho Opportunity Scholarship	Formal offers made following need & merit ranking	Mid-April
Idaho LAUNCH	Final application deadline	April 15
Idaho LAUNCH	Final offer letters sent via email	Early May
Idaho LAUNCH	Final offer letter acceptance deadline in the Idaho Grant Management System	May 31
Apply Idaho	Applications close	June 30
Idaho Campus Choice	Deadline to complete admission application with chosen institution	June 30
Idaho LAUNCH	Deadline to verify graduation by uploading diploma or transcript	June 30



IDAHO **LAUNCH**

nextsteps.idaho.gov/LAUNCH



nextsteps.idaho.gov

For more information, please contact us at
idaholaunch@wdc.idaho.gov