



Learning-Aligned Employment Program (LAEP) Handbook

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Overview

The Learning-Aligned Employment Program (LAEP) was established in the 2021-22 California State Budget and is administered by the California Student Aid Commission (Commission), in consultation with the office of the President of the University of California (UC), the office of the Chancellor of the California State University (CSU), and the office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCC). LAEP provides eligible underrepresented college and university students with the opportunity to earn money to help defray their educational costs, while gaining education-aligned, career-related experience.

The Learning-Aligned Employment Program was created pursuant to [California Education Code \(CEC\) sections 69950 - 69969](#).

Participating institutions must use LAEP funds in accordance with the provisions set forth in the respective program statutes, federal and state regulations and procedures, the Commission website (csac.ca.gov), [Grant Operation Memos \(GOM\)](#), [Grant Special Alerts \(GSA\)](#), and Learning-Aligned Employment Program Agreement (LAEPA).

This handbook was created as a collaboration between the Commission and campus workgroup members representing the UC, CSU and CCC. The Commission thanks the workgroup members for their time and contributions.

LAEP is a new program launching at eligible campuses in the 2022-23 academic year. This handbook offers information available at the time it was last updated. Additional information about the program will be added as it becomes available. Please contact laep@csac.ca.gov with any questions.

Quick Resources

- LAEP Website: csac.ca.gov/laep
 - o LAEP Handbook and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
 - o List of participating institutions
 - o Recorded webinars, slide decks and program updates
 - o Employer Agreement template
- LAEP Email: laep@csac.ca.gov

Definition of Terms

- **ACA**- Administrative Cost Allowance
- **CADAA** – California Dream Act Application
- **CCC** – California Community College
- **CEC** – California Education Code
- **Commission** – The California Student Aid Commission
- **CSU** – California State University
- **FAFSA** – Free Application for Federal Student Aid
- **Institution** – Participating public postsecondary educational institution
- **LAEP** – The Learning-Aligned Employment Program
- **LAEPA** – The Learning-Aligned Employment Program Agreement
- **UC** – University of California

Program Administration

2022-2031 LAEP Agreement

Participating institutions submitted a 2022-31 Learning-Aligned Employment Program Agreement (LAEPA) to participate. LAEP funds allocated to institutions are available for encumbrance and expenditure by participating campuses until June 30, 2031.

Each participating institution is required, as a condition of participation in the program, to comply with auditing or other fiscal reporting requirements established by the Commission, in consultation with the office of the President of the UC, the office of the Chancellor of the CSU, and the office of the Chancellor of the CCC. These requirements are applied by the Commission to ensure that no LAEP payments are applied to the general aid or support of the institution.

LAEP Coordinator

The LAEP Coordinator is the person on campus who serves as the first point-of-contact for the program. Each participating campus has a LAEP Coordinator. The Commission contacts the LAEP Coordinator with updates and/or questions about LAEP for each campus. Please contact the LAEP team at laep@csac.ca.gov to update contact information for the LAEP Coordinator.

Administrative Cost Allowance (ACA)

The Institution may use up to 5 percent of the funds it receives under the program for its costs for administering the program.

- ACA is up to 5 percent of funds received. ACA will not be calculated based on expended LAEP funds. The Institution is not required to spend ACA proportionately to the expended student funds.
- Unspent ACA will roll over each year.
- Institutions may not collect an additional surcharge from external employers for the administrative costs of LAEP.
- ACA can cover the institution's costs, not the employer's or the student's. The institution can apply ACA to costs that the institution would typically incur. However, costs that would typically be borne by the employer or the student may not be covered by ACA funds.

Academic Credit

Participating institutions are strongly encouraged to develop competency-based educational opportunities in order to grant academic credit for work performed in a LAEP position. It is the sole responsibility of each institution to designate policies and procedures in the matter of granting academic credit.

Documentation

For each LAEP position, the institution should maintain all necessary records, including, but not limited to, need analysis documents, employer agreements, financial aid award documents, time sheets, and records of payments provided to the student.

Student Eligibility Documentation – See “Student Eligibility”

Job Description Documentation – See “Evaluation of the LAEP Position”

Student Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in LAEP, the student must meet the following criteria:

- Underrepresented background
- Half-time enrollment at a minimum
- Resident classification
- Demonstrated maintenance of satisfactory academic progress
- Demonstrated financial need
- Eligibility to work in the United States

Underrepresented Background

A student from an underrepresented background satisfying all of the eligibility criteria may participate in the program. “Underrepresented” students include first generation college students, low-income students, students who are current or former foster youth, homeless students or those at risk of becoming homeless, students with disabilities, displaced workers, students with dependent children, formerly incarcerated students, undocumented students, students meeting the requirements of Assembly Bill 540 of the 2001–2002 Regular Session of the Legislature, and students who are veterans. See LAEPA Article III, Section b.

Unless otherwise indicated, further clarification of these groups may be provided as needed by the applicable office of the President of the UC, the office of the Chancellor of the CSU, the office of the Chancellor of the CCC, or the CCC District Office.

The student must match at least one of the “underrepresented background” descriptors to participate in LAEP. “Underrepresented background” applies to the student and cannot be established through a parent.

If a student participating in LAEP no longer meets the “underrepresented background” criteria by which they qualified, the institution may reevaluate and document alternate criteria that qualify the student for the program. If the student no longer meets any of the “underrepresented” criteria, the student is no longer eligible to participate in LAEP. See “Status Changes” below.

Documentation – Underrepresented Background

The institution should retain documentation of the student’s eligibility for LAEP. Below are some examples of acceptable documentation for each underrepresented category.

First Generation College Students

- Self-reported designation on FAFSA or CADAA
- Self-reported designation on the admissions application
- Documentation from the campus registrar’s office

Low-Income Students

- Income data on FAFSA or CADAA
- Campus student information system data for students with an EFC (Expected Family Contribution) equivalent to the Pell eligible range
 - Students who completed the California Dream Act Application (CADAA) are not Pell-eligible. Therefore, an EFC equivalent to the Pell-eligible range should be used to determine equivalent designation for all students.
 - The Student Aid Index (SAI) may be referenced instead of the EFC.

Students Who are Current or Former Foster Youth

“Foster youth and former foster youth” means a person in California whose dependency was established or continued by a court of competent jurisdiction, including a tribal court, on or after the youth’s 13th birthday and who is no older than 25 years of age at the commencement of the academic year. [CEC 66025.9(b)(1)]

- Foster Youth (FY) Designation from the Commission (verified through the California Department of Social Services)
- Verification letter from a case worker or county office (including dates)

Homeless Students or Those at Risk of Becoming Homeless

Note: a student’s designation as homeless or at risk of being homeless may change at any point in the academic year.

- Self-reported designation on FAFSA or CADAA
- Professional Judgement performed by the financial aid office
- Basic Needs Office documentation
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Documentation

Students with Disabilities

- Documentation from campus Disability/Accessibility Resource Center

Displaced Workers

Note: “displaced worker” applies to the student and cannot be established through a parent.

- Self-reported designation on FAFSA or CADAA
- Professional Judgement performed by the financial aid office
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Documentation

Students with Dependent Children

- Self-reported designation on FAFSA or CADAA
- Self-reported through campus-specific form
- Students with Dependent Children (SWD) designation from the Commission

Formerly Incarcerated Students

Note: Currently incarcerated students are not eligible to participate in LAEP.

- Documentation from campus student resource center or “Project Rebound” data

Undocumented Students/Students Meeting the Requirements of Assembly Bill 540 of the 2001–2002 Regular Session of the Legislature

Note: The institution is responsible for ensuring that the student is eligible to work in the U.S. for the entirety of the term of employment.

- California Dream Act Application, affidavit
- DACA Employment Authorization Card

Students Who are Veterans

Note: “veteran” applies to the student and cannot be established through a parent.

- DD214
- Documentation from the campus registrar’s office
- Documentation from the veterans' services center on campus

Half-Time Enrollment

Participating undergraduate students must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment at least half-time in courses required for completion of a degree or certificate EXCEPT during the summer term, as outlined below. Half-time enrollment is determined by the institution, in accordance with institutional financial aid policy. High school students and graduate students are not eligible to participate in LAEP.

A student enrolled in a teacher credential program is eligible to participate. The student’s enrollment status for LAEP eligibility should be calculated based on the units in the teacher credential program only.

Summer

The institution may allow summer learning-aligned employment opportunities in order to provide learning-aligned employment positions for eligible students who may find it difficult to locate meaningful employment during the academic year because of a rigorous academic program that does not allow them to work during the academic year or because they are required to participate in an intensive work experience that satisfies academic requirements.

To be eligible to participate in a summer LAEP opportunity, the student must be:

- enrolled at least half-time in summer courses required for completion of a degree or certificate, or
- accepted for enrollment on at least a half-time basis for the following normal academic term.

For example, an incoming freshman or transfer student can work the summer before starting classes if they have enrolled at least half-time for the upcoming fall. An outgoing (summer) graduate cannot work the final summer of their senior year unless they are enrolled at least half-time in courses toward their degree.

Resident Classification

State of California residence pursuant to CEC Part 41 (CEC section 68000, et seq.) is required. Institutions are encouraged to document California residency using existing methods for verifying California residency per the office of the President of the University of California (UC), the office of the Chancellor of the California State University (CSU), and the office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (CCC).

Demonstrated Maintenance of Satisfactory Academic Progress

To participate in LAEP, a student must demonstrate maintenance of satisfactory academic progress in a program leading to a degree or a certificate, as determined by the institution in which the student is enrolled, applying standards of eligibility for federal financial aid.

For purposes of this determination, homelessness, as defined as a “homeless individual” within the meaning of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 11302(a)), or as defined as a “homeless child or youth,” as defined in subsection (2) of Section 725 of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 11434a(2)), is an extenuating circumstance for students who are unable to meet the requirements deemed to constitute “satisfactory academic progress” at that institution that may be considered by the institution to alter or excuse compliance with the progress requirements.

Demonstrated Financial Need

To participate in LAEP, a student must demonstrate financial need. Demonstrated financial need is determined by the financial aid office of the institution in which the student is enrolled, pursuant to the methodologies approved by the United States Department of Education for use in awarding funds provided under Title IV of the federal Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. If individual circumstances affect the ability of the student or the student’s family to contribute to the student’s total financial resources, the financial aid administrator may make reasonable individualized adjustments to the computed total applicant resources.

Eligibility to work in the United States

To participate in LAEP, a student must be eligible to work in the United States. Students who completed the CA Dream Act Application (CADAA) can participate in LAEP if they are eligible to work in the United States.

Status Changes

If a student’s status changes affect their LAEP eligibility, the institution should reevaluate the student’s eligibility following institutional procedures for other types of financial aid. Institutional procedures should be followed consistently for all students.

If the institution determines that the student is no longer eligible for the LAEP position, the institution should take action to alert the employer within a reasonable amount of time.

Prioritization

Each participating institution should prioritize the following eligible students for available learning-aligned employment opportunities under the program:

- first generation college student, or
- a current or former foster youth, or
- a student who is homeless, or at risk of being homeless

Each participating institution should further prioritize for available learning-aligned employment opportunities an eligible student meeting this priority criteria who is also majoring in a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) discipline.

In the event that a limited amount of funding or a limited number of positions are available, the institution should give priority to any student who is a first-generation college student, a current or former foster youth, homeless, or at risk of being homeless. If, after prioritizing these students, the number of eligible students still exceeds the available funding or number of positions, the institution should give further priority to any student who is also majoring in a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) discipline.

Student Eligibility Quick Guide

Underrepresented	LAEP Criteria	Prioritization
Required for participation	Required for participation	Not required for participation but must be prioritized when applicable
Student must match one or more of the descriptors to participate.	Student must meet <u>all</u> of the criteria to participate.	Student must match one or more of the descriptors to be prioritized.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first generation college students • low-income students • current or former foster youth • homeless students or those at risk of becoming homeless • students with disabilities • displaced workers • students with dependent children • formerly incarcerated students • undocumented students • students meeting the requirements of Assembly Bill 540 of the 2001–2002 Regular Session of the Legislature • students who are veterans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half-time enrollment (minimum) • Resident classification • Demonstrated maintenance of satisfactory academic progress • Demonstrated financial need • Eligibility to work in the United States 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first generation college students • current or former foster youth • Homeless students or those at risk of becoming homeless <p>The institution should further prioritize students matching these descriptors who are majoring in a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) discipline.</p>

Student Agreement Template

Institutions may elect to customize and use the form below to document student eligibility and agreement to LAEP requirements. It is a campus responsibility to document each student's eligibility to participate in LAEP.

[Institution Name]

Learning-Aligned Employment Program (LAEP) Student Agreement

Student Name: _____

Employer: _____

Position Title: _____

The Learning-Aligned Employment Program (LAEP) offers eligible students at public colleges and universities the opportunity to earn money to help defray their educational costs while gaining education-aligned, career-related employment. By signing below, you agree to the following:

- I certify that I understand that I am required to alert the **[Institution Name]** Career Center and Financial Aid Office if I am no longer enrolled at least half-time in courses, or if I become otherwise ineligible to participate in LAEP. To participate, a student must continue to:
 - be enrolled at least half-time, OR in summer, be enrolled at least half-time for summer term or the following fall term
 - be a California resident
 - demonstrate financial need, as determined by the financial aid office
 - maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), as defined by **[Institution Name]**
 - be eligible to work in the United States
- Per California Education Code Section 69959(a), a student participating in LAEP shall only be placed in an educationally beneficial position that relates to the student's area of study, career objective, or the exploration of career objectives. I certify that the position listed above is educationally beneficial and relates to my area of study, my career objectives, or the exploration of my career objectives in the following way(s):

Campus Positions Only – Research Mentor Name and Contact Information:

Research Mentor Name: _____ Contact: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Employer Eligibility

Each participating institution should collaborate with local employers to identify learning-aligned employment opportunities that are located near the institution, aligned with the areas of study offered by the institution, and aligned with an eligible student's area of study.

The institution should work to develop partnerships with employers willing to contribute resources toward a percentage share of student compensation.

All of the following entities are eligible to employ students participating in the program:

Research Centers and Institutions

Research centers and institutions operated by public postsecondary educational institutions are eligible if their learning-aligned employment opportunities provide participating students with direct opportunities to participate in the research that is undertaken by the respective research centers and institutions.

If the direct employer is the UC, CSU, CCC, or one of its respective campuses, the program may provide 100 percent of the student's compensation.

“Research” is defined by the institution and should be a significant component of any LAEP position in which the employer is a research center or institution operated by a public postsecondary educational institution. Research is not limited to scientific research and can take place outside of an academic discipline. The research should be directed and supervised by faculty, staff or another mentor who will determine the research requirements.

Students may work at a LAEP-eligible institution other than their school of attendance. Only employers listed in CEC 69954 are eligible to participate and compensation must comply with CEC 69962. When a student is employed by another LAEP-eligible institution, the LAEP funds of the college of attendance may pay up to 100% of the student's compensation. LAEP funds of the employing campus may not be used to pay the student.

Public Schools

Public schools operated by school districts, county superintendents of schools, the Department of the Youth Authority, or the Department of Education are eligible.

For LAEP positions with public educational institutions or nonprofit corporations, the program may provide no more than 90 percent of the student's compensation.

Nonprofit and For-profit Employers

Nonsectarian, nonpolitical organizations or corporations, whether nonprofit or for-profit enterprises licensed to conduct business in the state, are eligible if they are capable of providing participating students with full-time employment opportunities, or opportunities to connect with other employers capable of providing participating students with full-time employment opportunities, within their areas of study after graduation.

For LAEP positions with nonprofit employers, the program may provide no more than 90 percent of the student's compensation.

For LAEP positions with for-profit employers, the program may provide no more than 50 percent of the student's compensation.

Employer Agreement

Once the public postsecondary educational institution has identified a learning-aligned employment position, the employer and the institution should execute a written agreement that confirms the employer's eligibility to participate in the program and its willingness to comply with all program requirements.

The agreement is subject to annual renewal by mutual agreement of the institution and the employer.

The following are recommended to be included in the Employer Agreement:

- Maximum hours allowed for LAEP students
- Maximum compensation allowed for LAEP students
- Frequency of compensation (weekly, biweekly, lump sum, etc.)
- Responsibilities of each of the parties.
- Guidelines to prevent students from working in a LAEP position during scheduled class times. Exceptions may include when an individual class is cancelled, if the instructor has excused the student from attending for a particular day, and if the student is receiving credit for employment in an internship, externship, or community work-study experience.
- Which party will pay the student directly and which will reimburse the other (if applicable).
- Annual renewal procedure for the Employer Agreement

Please see the LAEP website at www.csac.ca.gov for an Employer Agreement template and contact laep@csac.ca.gov with any questions.

Evaluation of the LAEP Position

Following execution of the Employer Agreement, the employer may interview prospective students. The institution should provide the employer and each applicant for the LAEP position with adequate information to facilitate a student's potential employment.

Both of the following priorities should be followed at the time of job referral and placement:

- A student shall only be placed in an educationally beneficial position that relates to the student's area of study, career objective, or the exploration of career objectives.
- The program shall include and emphasize placements for students with employers that are capable of providing them with full-time employment opportunities, or opportunities to connect with other employers that are capable of providing them with full-time employment opportunities, within their areas of study after graduation.

If the priorities specified above have been met, the employer may indicate the employer's hiring preferences.

An employer must not discriminate between applicants on any basis listed in subdivision (a) of Section 12940 of the Government Code, as those bases are defined in Sections 12926 and 12926.1 of the Government Code, except as otherwise provided in Section 12940 of the Government Code, or subject any applicant to any other discriminatory practices prohibited by state or federal law.

Each learning-aligned employment position identified by an institution should be reviewed by the appropriate institutional staff to determine whether it satisfies all of the following conditions:

- a. The position is educationally beneficial or related to a particular career interest or the exploration of career options.
- b. The work performed by the student is not related to the activities of any sectarian organization or to any partisan or nonpartisan political activities.
- c. The employment of a LAEP student will not displace workers currently employed by the participating employer or impair existing contracts for services.
- d. The LAEP position will not violate any applicable collective bargaining agreements or fill any vacancies due to a labor dispute.
- e. The student will be paid at a comparable rate to that paid for comparable positions within the employing organization. If the employing organization has no comparable position, the student will be paid at a rate comparable to that paid by other organizations in the field for work involving comparable duties and responsibilities. The positions will be compared on the basis of the nature of the work performed and the background and skills required for the position, and not upon the employee's part-time or student status.
- f. The number of hours of LAEP employment the student is allowed to work is determined by each institution in accordance with its standards and practices, taking into consideration the extent of the student's financial need and the

potential harm of the combination of work and study hours on a student's satisfactory academic progress.

- g. The employer will provide the institution with an accurate accounting of hours worked and wages earned.
- h. The total compensation received by the student pursuant to LAEP will not exceed the total amount authorized by the institution.
- i. The employer will provide the student with reasonable supervision.
- j. LAEP funds will not supplant any state, federal, or institutional funds used to support existing paid positions for students in profit or nonprofit organizations.

Documentation – LAEP Position

Relation to the Student's Area of Study

A student shall only be placed in an educationally beneficial position that relates to the student's area of study, career objective, or the exploration of career objectives. Below are some examples of acceptable documentation:

- Self-certification from the student
- Written evaluation from institution faculty or staff

Capability of Connecting to Full Time Employment

The institution should include and emphasize placements for students with employers that are capable of providing them with full-time employment opportunities after graduation, or opportunities to connect with other employers that are capable of providing them with full-time employment opportunities after graduation, within their areas of study. Below are some examples of acceptable documentation:

- Inclusion in the Employer Agreement
- Written statement from employer
- Written evaluation from institution faculty or staff

Job Description

Each LAEP position should have a job description that includes:

- name/classification of the position (e.g., laboratory assistant, teaching assistant, library assistant etc.);
- name and address of the student's employer (the school, public agency, nonprofit organization, etc.);
- department or office in which the student will be employed;
- location where the student will perform his/her duties;
- name of the student's supervisor;
- the length of the student's employment (beginning and ending dates);
- purpose or role of the position within the organization;
- duties and responsibilities associated with the position and how they relate to the purpose or role;
- rates of pay for the position;

- general qualifications for the position and the specific qualifications for the various levels or rates of pay associated with the position;
- procedures for determining a student's rate of pay when a position has multiple rates; and
- evaluation procedures and schedules, if applicable.

Timesheets

The institution must maintain adequate timesheets or records of hours worked for LAEP students. The amounts and hours recorded must match the hours for which the student is paid. LAEP timesheets must be certified by the student's supervisor.

Fiscal Management and Payments

The Commission allocated all LAEP funds to participating institutions at the beginning of the 2022-23 academic year based on each institution's share of students receiving a federal Pell Grant in the most recent prior fiscal year for which data was available for all program participants. Each year, unused LAEP funds roll over to the following year.

Payments

A student who is employed in a LAEP position should not be compensated until the student earns that compensation by performing work. LAEP students will receive a paycheck for hours worked.

The share of LAEP funds that may be used to compensate the student depends on the type of employer (see 'Employer Eligibility'). An institution can pay the non-LAEP share from its own funds or other sources such as outside funds from an off-campus employer.

- For LAEP positions with for-profit employers, the program may provide no more than 50 percent of the student's compensation.
- For LAEP positions with public educational institutions or nonprofit corporations, the program may provide no more than 90 percent of the student's compensation.
- If the direct employer is the UC, the CSU, the CCC, or one of its respective campuses, the program may provide 100 percent of the student's compensation.

The institution or other employer may pay the student directly. The institution or employer may reimburse the other for the respective share of funds. The Employer Agreement should include the steps the institution and employer will take, the documentation the institution and employer will provide, and the time frame within which each party will pay its share of the student's compensation. The institution should have a system for ensuring that off-campus employers are invoiced for their share of LAEP wages in a timely manner (if applicable). In addition, the institution should have a system for following up if invoices remain unpaid after a reasonable period of time. The institution's accounting entries must completely track the invoicing and receipt of the employer's share (or vice-versa).

A student is entitled to compensation for hours already worked, even if the student subsequently becomes ineligible for LAEP. Regardless of who employs the student, the institution is responsible for ensuring that the student is paid for work performed.

LAEP funds paid to students may only pay student wages and may not include sick leave, vacation pay, holiday pay, fringe benefits, workers' compensation, retirement, transportation costs, or other benefits. This is true even if LAEP funds are used for 100 percent of the student's compensation.

Deductions from the student's earned compensation, such as taxes and union dues, may be deducted from the student's paycheck as with any other paycheck.

An institution may not credit a student's account with the student's LAEP earnings to cover institutional charges without the student's permission.

Reconciliation

The Institution agrees to annually reconcile and report to the Commission its total LAEP fund expenditures, including student compensation and administrative cost allowance, no later than September 30. (LAEPA Article II, Section I.)

Unused funds will roll over to the following year. There is no institutional penalty for unused funds.

The Institution agrees that LAEP payments cannot be made for work performed after June 30, 2031 and agrees to return any unused LAEP funds, including remaining interest earned, to the Commission no later than September 30, 2031. (LAEPA Article II, Section m.)

WebGrants LAEP Module and Data Reporting Procedures

(Placeholder)

- Input LAEP funding expended
 - o Student funds
 - o ACA
- Input population served
 - o Underrepresented descriptor
 - o STEM Y/N
 - o Academic credit Y/N
- Input employer data
 - o Employer type (institution, public school, nonprofit, for-profit)
 - o Employer industry, if applicable
 - o Research mentor, if applicable
- View reports of campus-level data

Note: Additional information regarding the WebGrants LAEP module and LAEP data reporting procedures will be included in future versions of this handbook. Please contact laep@csac.ca.gov with any questions.