SilverSkills Program Guidelines

The Ohio Department of Aging's (ODA's) SilverSkills Program supports healthcare employers in the aging sector with upskilling current and future employees in today's high-need care economy. Employers who submit successful grant applications will be reimbursed up to $2,500 per credential per worker when current or prospective employees complete eligible direct care worker upskilling credentials.

Application and Grant Award Process

1. An eligible employer applies for grant funding during the application period established by ODA for the bimonthly funding period.
2. ODA approves the application and awards a grant.
3. The grant amount is based on the employer's projected cost for the bimonthly funding period, subject to a maximum reimbursement per award of $45,000.
4. The number of grants that can be awarded is subject to the overall program funding cap of $1.5 million per bimonthly period.
5. The grantee employer pays for current or prospective employees to complete an eligible credential program.
6. A current or prospective employee successfully completes the program and receives an approved credential.
7. For external training programs, the grantee employer submits a copy of the credential earned, an invoice clearly identifying the cost of the credential, proof of payment, and a copy of the SilverSkills Employment Verification to receive reimbursement under the grant.
8. For employer-run training programs, the grantee employer submits documentation confirming their status as an approved training provider for the credential (if applicable), a reimbursement form indicating the market cost for the credential as determined by the ODA Credential Review Committee, and a copy of the SilverSkills Employment Verification to receive reimbursement under the grant.

Employer Eligibility

Any Ohio healthcare employer providing aging services outlined below who is registered with the Secretary of State, has a physical location in Ohio, and employs Ohio resident W-2 employees is eligible to apply. Employers of all sizes are encouraged to apply. Only one application will be accepted per employer per application period. Agencies of the State of Ohio are not eligible to receive reimbursement.

Eligible Healthcare Providers:

- Skilled nursing facilities/long-term care facilities
- Residential care facilities
- PASSPORT providers
- Home health agencies
- Adult day centers

- Senior care centers
- PACE providers

Individual Eligibility

After being awarded a grant, Ohio employers may apply for reimbursement for current and/or prospective employee credentialing. Employers will not be required to identify specific individuals on the grant application but will be required to identify employees who earned the approved credentials when completing reimbursement requests. To receive reimbursement, the employer must be able to verify that credential earners are Ohio residents with a verifiable Ohio address. Individuals must be W-2 employees at the time of the reimbursement request; independent contractors or 1099 employees are not eligible for this program. A SilverSkills Employment Verification for each individual will be required when requesting reimbursement.

Grant Application Period and Scoring Criteria

When the bimonthly application period opens, employers can apply for eligibility to ODA. ODA will award grants to applicants who meet eligibility requirements and submit complete applications on a first-come, first-served basis. Award amounts will be based on the employer's projected cost or reimbursement amount for eligible credentials for their workers during the bimonthly funding period, subject to the limits of $2,500 per credential per worker and $45,000 per employer per bimonthly funding period. Grant awards are also subject to funding availability under the overall annual program cap of $1.5 million per bimonthly funding period. Any portion of the $1.5 million not paid out for a bimonthly funding period can be transferred to a subsequent period within the same state fiscal year.

Information Required for Application

Applicants will be required to submit the following information:

Employer Information:

- Federal Tax ID
- Employer name
- Supplier ID number
- Aging waiver provider ID or Medicaid provider ID (if applicable)
- Address
- Aging service category
- Number of full-time employees in Ohio
- Employer website link (if applicable)
- Employer point of contact and contact information

Credential Information (to be completed for each credential included in the grant application):

- Name of the credential (from approved list)
- Projected per-person training cost (if applicable) for the credential
- Projected per-person certification test cost (if applicable) for each credential

- Projected total actual cost per credential (training or and/or certification costs combined, subject to $2,500 limit)
- Name of training provider
- Type of training provider (employer-run or external)

Trainee Information:

- Projected number of employees who will earn each credential
- Total cumulative amount of credential reimbursement, if applying for reimbursement for multiple credentials.

Credential Eligibility

Credentials must meet the following requirements:

Industry-recognized

The term ''industry-recognized,'' used with respect to a credential, means a credential that is sought or accepted by employers within the industry or sector involved as a recognized, preferred, or required credential for recruitment, screening, hiring, retention, or advancement purposes; and, where appropriate, is endorsed by a nationally recognized trade association or organization representing a significant part of the industry or sector.

Care-focused

A care-focused credential prioritizes the development of direct care worker skills to enhance the quality of care in the aging services industry in Ohio. Examples of care-focused credentials include those related to dementia, mental and behavioral health, patient de-escalation, and medication administration certification. The ODA Credential Review Committee recommends credentials on the approved list.

Short-term

Must be completed in less than 12 months and require fewer than 30 credit hours or 900 clock hours.

Responsible

Where possible, online and distance-learning programs are encouraged. When in-person elements are necessary, employers and training providers must ensure they comply with Ohio Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations.

Adding Credentials to the Approved List

SilverSkills is designed to respond to employers' dynamic direct care workforce needs. Employers can request that additional credentials meeting the eligibility requirements identified above be added to the list of eligible credentials. When filling out the SilverSkills application, employers will choose "Credential Not Listed" and be prompted to provide:

- Name of credential
- Identification of the credential as a certificate or certification
- For certificates: number of credit hours or clock hours
- For certifications: certification-issuing body
- Evidence the competencies/skills taught or measured in the credential are care-focused
- Link to credential website or uploaded syllabus/curriculum

Credential Review Committee

The Credential Review Committee will consist of no fewer than 5 provider or provider association representatives in the aging services network selected by ODA. The committee will meet quarterly and has two main functions. One is to review and approve applications for new credentials that will be included in SilverSkills. The other is to assign a reimbursement amount for credentials offered through employer-run training programs based on the average market rate of similar external training programs. The committee will review the reimbursement amounts for approved credentials annually to reflect current market costs.

Credentialing Timeline

To be eligible for reimbursement during a bimonthly funding period, training for approved credentials must start within 8 weeks of the effective date of the grant award and must be completed by the end date of the grant award. The effective date of the grant award will be the first day of the month immediately following the last bimonthly funding period. The end date will be the end of the current bimonthly funding period.

Eligible Training Providers and Reimbursement

The SilverSkills program encourages employers to partner with the training provider that will most effectively meet their needs. Eligible training providers include universities, community colleges, technical centers, and private training providers. SilverSkills will also reimburse employers for employer-run training or credentialing programs at a reimbursement amount established for each credential by the ODA Credential Review Committee. When conducting credentialing programs with in-person elements, training providers must ensure they comply with Ohio Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations.

Reimbursable Costs

Employers may be reimbursed for documented outlays covering tuition, lab fees, manuals, textbooks, testing fees, and certification costs, up to $2,500 per credential. The employer, not the employee, must incur the costs. For employer-run training programs, reimbursement is the amount assigned to the credential by the Credential Review Committee. The maximum amount of reimbursement an employer may receive in a bimonthly funding period is $45,000.

Reimbursement Timeline

Employers must submit documentation within eight (8) weeks of an employee completing the credential to receive reimbursement.

Reimbursement Process

To request reimbursement, employers that have received grant awards must submit the following information to ODA:

Credential Documentation: Proof that the individual has completed the specified credential, such as a copy of the certificate or certification uploaded as a .pdf file.

Cost Documentation: For external training providers, an itemized invoice that clearly identifies the cost of the credential. Proof of payment which may include either a cleared check, a credit card statement, or a bank statement. The document must identify the training provider, the amount paid, and the date paid and must clearly show that the payor is the SilverSkills grant awardee. For employer-run training programs, employers will submit requests for reimbursement at the amount specified by the Credential Review Committee for the credential.

Credential Earner Information:

- Name (first and last)
- Email
- Last 4 digits of Social Security Number (if applicable)
- Date of birth
- County of residence
- Wage before credential
- Wage after credential is earned
- Race (optional)
- Gender (optional)
- A copy of the SilverSkills Employment Verification form for each employee included in the request.