



State University of New York College of
Environmental Science and Forestry

Federal Work-Study Program Student Handbook

2025 – 2026

Office of Financial Aid & Scholarship | 1 Forestry Drive, Syracuse, NY 13210-2278
SUNY ESF | 315-470-6671 | Fax 315-470-4734 | rshilts@esf.edu

01/07/2025

General Information

Program Overview

The Federal Work-Study Program is administered by the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships. A combination of federal, state and institutional allocations provides funding for the program, which is designed to create employment opportunities tailored to the unique needs of college students. Whenever possible, work-study employment will take into account the academic and professional interests of the student: course work and other academic requirements will always receive first priority.

Work-Study employment is available for enrolled students during the academic year and during the summer for any students planning to enroll in the following academic year. Incoming students **are** eligible to work during the summer prior to their first year of enrollment at SUNY ESF.

Federal Work-Study funds are awarded to students as part of a comprehensive financial aid package. Students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and show financial need in order to qualify for a grant award. However, unlike other financial aid sources, funds from work-study grants are only given to the student as they are earned from employment in a work-study specified position. Students who obtain work-study employment will be paid every other week based on a specified hourly wage rate. It is important to note that work-study earnings cannot be automatically applied to billable college expenses on behalf of the student.

The Application Process

To be considered for a Federal Work-Study grant, students should first complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). It is recommended that the FAFSA be completed as soon as possible after January 1st prior to the desired employment period. For priority consideration, the FAFSA must be submitted to the federal processor and received by SUNY ESF no later than February 1st. FAFSA records received after February 1st will still be considered, but only after other priority applications have been reviewed.

Students interested in employment during the academic year should indicate this on the appropriate FAFSA question regarding student employment. Students interested in summer employment should, in addition to indicating interest on the FAFSA, complete the separate [Summer FWS Application \(https://www.esf.edu/tuition-aid/financialaid/sumfwsapp.php\)](https://www.esf.edu/tuition-aid/financialaid/sumfwsapp.php).

The Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships will determine eligibility for work-study grants and offer awards based on the following:

- Demonstrated Financial Need
- Eligibility for Other Need-Based Financial Aid
- Timeliness of Required Application
- Student's Past Use of FWS Funds
- Amount of Available Funding
- Late Notification of Outside Scholarships or Other Aid Impacting Financial Need

Students who believe they are eligible for Federal Work-Study but are not offered a grant in their initial financial aid award notification letter are encouraged to contact the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships as soon as possible to discuss adjustments.

The Paperwork Process

All students need to submit completed paperwork prior to starting work in each new employment period (summer or academic year). All employees must submit the Federal Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate (W-4), the NY State Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate (IT-2104 or IT-2104e), the Federal Work-Study Appointment Form, and the SUNY ESF Employee Questionnaire.

In addition to the above listed forms, new employees or employees who have not worked within the previous calendar year must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form (I-9) and the Employees Retirement System Waiver Form (ERS). These forms must be done in person with an authorized college representative.

Paperwork packets and instructions can be downloaded from the [SUNY ESF website](https://www.esf.edu/tuition-aid/financialaid/studentfws.php) (<https://www.esf.edu/tuition-aid/financialaid/studentfws.php>). Hard copies are available upon request from the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships.

Obtaining Employment

At SUNY ESF, eligible students are responsible for finding their own federal work-study position(s)—**placement in work-study position is not guaranteed**. At the start of each employment period (summer or academic year), the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships will release a list of the current openings and contact information for the respective supervisors. These lists will be posted on the Financial Aid Bulletin Board in Bray Hall and on the [website](https://wwwinfo.esf.edu/JobList/SearchPostings.asp) (<https://wwwinfo.esf.edu/JobList/SearchPostings.asp>).

Once a hiring agreement has been reached, the supervisor will complete the appropriate section of the FWS Appointment Form provided with the employment paperwork. All forms should then be submitted to the Office of Financial Aid &

Scholarships for Processing. Students cannot receive pay until all required forms have been properly completed and submitted.

Scheduling and Employment Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the student and the supervisor to arrange appropriate work schedules and position duties when reaching a hiring agreement. However, there are several program guidelines that must be followed when making these decisions.

Weekly Hour Limit – student employees may not work more than 20 hours per week during any period when classes are in session, and more than 40 hours per week when classes are not in session. Students who are not at least 18 years of age may not work more than 37.5 hours per week when classes are not in session. This policy also includes hours worked through the *Student Assistant* payroll.

Student Allocation Limit – student employees may not earn more than the accepted grant amount during an assigned employment period (summer or academic year). Students are responsible for tracking their own earnings and ensuring that their total gross wages will not exceed the grant amount. It is recommended that students carefully review the estimated number of work hours listed within each position's job description and discuss their expected hours with the supervisor. The following formula can be used to determine the average number of hours that can be worked per week without exceeding the grant amount:

Accepted Grant Amount ÷ Assigned Wage Rate ÷ Number of Weeks in Employment Period

Supervisor Allocation Limit – each FWS supervisor is given an allocation for paying student wages. The total earned by all students working for all the same supervisors cannot exceed that allocation amount. Students and supervisors are advised to consider the hours for all employees when determining individual work schedules. If a student is not able to earn the full grant amount, additional jobs may be obtained as needed. Note that students are not required to earn all or even part of their work-study allocation.

The Payroll Process

Federal Work-Study students at SUNY ESF are employees of New York State. The Payroll Office is responsible for creating new appointments and reporting hours worked to the state offices in Albany.

Student employees should report hours worked by submitting completed time sheets to their supervisor for each two-week time period as indicated on the *Time Period Schedule*. This schedule is provided to students in the paperwork packets and can also

be downloaded from the SUNY ESF website. Supervisors will then approve the reported hours and deliver the timesheet to the Payroll Office for submission to Albany. Students are responsible for ensuring that their timesheet is delivered to the supervisor and subsequently forwarded on to the Payroll Office by the due date listed on the *Time Period Schedule*. *Most time sheets are now completed online and FWS students will get a link sent to them by the Payroll Office upon being hired.

Students will receive a paycheck for each period in which work hours have been submitted on the check date listed on the *Time Period Schedule*. Pay for timesheets submitted after the listed due date will not be available until the listed check date for the next time period. Students should note that there is a minimum 4-week lag between timesheet processing and check availability.

Paychecks are held for pickup at the Cashier's Office in Bray Hall unless other arrangements are made. Students may use the Direct Deposit form found with the employment paperwork in order to have wages go directly into a checking or savings account.

Blank timesheets are available for pickup from the Payroll Office. Students employed through the Federal Work-Study program should use pink timesheets. Green timesheets are for *Student Assistant* employees.

Unless otherwise arranged with a supervisor **and** the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships, the wage rate for Federal Work-Study employment is \$15.50 per hour during the academic year and \$15.50 per hour during the summer. These wage rates are subject to change in order to ensure compliance with federal and state minimum wage laws.

Important Guidelines and Regulations

1. There are two eligible employment periods for Federal Work-Study, summer and academic year. Students must submit new paperwork anytime a new position is added for either period. The summer employment period begins the day after spring commencement and ends on the last day before the start of fall classes. The academic year employment period begins on the first day of fall classes and ends on the day of spring commencement.
2. As employees of SUNY ESF and New York State, Federal Work-Study students are expected to behave in a responsible and professional manner. All applicable employment laws should be followed and proper communication with supervisors for all matters is encouraged. Termination and dismissal actions are the responsibility of the direct supervisor.
3. Federal Work-Study employees are expected to maintain confidentiality with personal and other protected information at all times.
4. Students should not work more than 6 consecutive hours without a minimum 30-minute break. Meal or other break times should be reported as hours worked on the timesheet.
5. Timesheets are now done virtually.
6. Work hours should not be scheduled during a student's classes, and every allowance should be made for non-scheduled academic requirements. Students are asked to submit a copy of their academic schedule to their supervisor(s) each semester. This schedule should be posted at the job site.
7. A student employee should never work without supervision, and one work-study student cannot supervise another.
8. Work-study employment cannot be for academic credits. A student can earn credit for performing duties that may be part of a work-study assignment, but wages cannot be paid for the credit-bearing portion of the work.
9. Students are responsible for tracking their own earnings and ensuring that the earned wages do not exceed the accepted grant amount for the current employment period.
10. SUNY ESF is not authorized to provide specific guidance for completing tax-withholding forms. Students are encouraged to discuss tax withholding with their parents and/or a paid tax advisor for assistance.

Contact and Other Information

Payroll Office

119 Bray Hall

315-470-6624

Mailing Address: 102 Bray Hall

Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships

113 Bray Hall

315-470-6671

315-470-4734 (Fax)

Web Links

- [General Federal Work-Study Information](https://www.esf.edu/tuition-aid/financialaid/fws.php) (<https://www.esf.edu/tuition-aid/financialaid/fws.php>)
- [Federal Work-Study Resources](https://www.esf.edu/tuition-aid/financialaid/studentfws.php) (<https://www.esf.edu/tuition-aid/financialaid/studentfws.php>)
- [Online Job Descriptions](https://wwwinfo.esf.edu/JobList/SearchPostings.asp) (<https://wwwinfo.esf.edu/JobList/SearchPostings.asp>)
- [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](https://studentaid.gov/), (<https://studentaid.gov/>)
- [Summer Federal Work-Study Application](https://www.esf.edu/tuition-aid/financialaid/sumfwsapp.php) (<https://www.esf.edu/tuition-aid/financialaid/sumfwsapp.php>)
- [Payroll Office Resources](https://www.esf.edu/business/payroll/) (<https://www.esf.edu/business/payroll/>)
- [SUNY ESF Administrative Policies and Procedures](https://www.esf.edu/employees/policies/index.php) (<https://www.esf.edu/employees/policies/index.php>)