Getting a cert paid for with Army CA or Air Force COOL

The short version of how both programs work, pulled from ArmyIgnitED, Army COOL, AFVEC and the AF COOL Handbook. Rules change, so check the official portal before you submit anything.

	Army Credentialing Assistance in ArmyIgnitED	**Air Force COOL** in AFVEC
Who can use it	Enlisted Soldiers, NCOs and Warrant Officers (active, Guard and Reserve). Officers can't open new CA goals as of 19 Mar 2026. Veterans and family members aren't eligible.	Enlisted RegAF, USSF, AFRES and ANG on active duty orders, with a 5-skill level in your primary AFSC, no UIF or control roster, and a current fitness assessment.
What it typically covers	Training (classroom, online or hands-on), study materials, exam fees and recertification.	Exams, a prep course (up to $2,000 per goal), study materials (up to $500 per goal), fees, and recerts of credentials AF COOL already paid for.
What it doesn't cover	Credentials required for MOS qualification, college admissions test prep, Career Skills Programs, apprenticeships, or anything you paid for yourself.	Certs required for your duty position, hardware, CEUs or PDUs, subscriptions, travel, or a retake after a failed exam.
Money limits	**$2,000 per fiscal year** ($1,000 for some pilot credentials), inside the $4,500 combined TA and CA cap. One new goal per FY, and 3 credentials per 10 years of service.	**$4,500 lifetime.** Unlimited credentials tied to your primary AFSC, plus two outside it.
When to submit	**45 to 90 days before the course or exam starts.** Inside 45 days, ArmyIgnitED won't take the request.	**30 to 60 days before the start date.** Your supervisor has 7 days to approve or it drops. Not open to you within 120 days of separation or retirement.

THE STEPS

1 Find the credential

Look it up on Army COOL or AF COOL. Army first-timers do the MilGears plan and CA 101. Air Force members finish Virtual Benefits Training in AFVEC.

2 Pick an approved vendor

Choose a vendor listed for that credential in ArmyIgnitED or AF COOL. Enter the vendor name exactly the way the portal shows it.

3 Request a quote

Army: a custom quote with your name, dates, every item, the total and the vendor's name. Air Force: an itemized invoice or quote on your goal.

4 Submit inside the window

Create the education goal, then a separate funding request for each item (course, exam, books). Each one has to match the quote.

5 Wait for approval

Your supervisor signs off first, then the Army CA Program Office or the AFCOOL Program Office. Don't start class until it shows approved and paid.

6 Take the class and exam

Then get results uploaded on time. Army: request the exam within 180 days of passing training. Air Force: grades are due by the deadline on your request.

HAVE THIS READY

- Your ArmyIgnitED or AFVEC login, with the right supervisor listed
- The credential name as it appears on COOL
- The vendor name as the portal lists it, plus a matching quote
- Course or exam start and end dates
- Army first-timers: a screenshot of your MilGears plan
- Anything the cert body needs first (PMP on AF COOL needs PMI's approval to test)
- Your ETS or separation date. Both programs have cutoffs.

Ask for a quote that matches the funding request. Don't pay out of pocket first.

Both programs pay the vendor directly after approval. Neither one reimburses you for something you bought on your own, and starting class before approval can leave you owing the full cost.

If you fail, withdraw or miss the exam, expect to pay some or all of it back. Pick a date you can actually make.

Questions about a course or a quote from us?

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Army CA accumentum.net/army-credentialing-assistance-training
AF COOL accumentum.net/air-force-cool-training

Official sources (start here)

Army COOL: cool.osd.mil/army
ArmyIgnitED: armyignited.army.mil
AF COOL and AFVEC: afvec.us.af.mil

Army CA counselors answer through ArmyIgnitED messaging. For AF COOL, message the AFCOOL Program Office in AFVEC or ask your base Education and Training office.

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