

NWMPA APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Journeyman Meat Cutter Program



TRAINING AGENT ORIENTATION GUIDE

How to Train an Apprentice in the NWMPA Program
For Use by All Training Agents — Phase 1 and Phase 2
Version 1 | April 2026

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is your orientation to the NWMPA Journeyman Meat Cutter Apprenticeship Program. Read it before you begin training your first apprentice. Keep it on hand as a reference throughout the program. Whether you are new to apprenticeship training or are returning to start a new section, this guide covers what the program is, what your role requires, how the documents work, and how to deliver training that meets the federal standard.

This guide does not replace the Training Agent Manual for any individual section. Each section has its own Training Agent Manual that tells you specifically how to facilitate that section's content on the production floor. This guide covers the program as a whole — the structure, the standards, and the practices that apply across every section you deliver.

Read this guide from beginning to end before you start. After that, refer to the section it covers as you need it.

SECTION 1 — PROGRAM OVERVIEW & PHASE STRUCTURE

What This Program Is

The NWMPA Journeyman Meat Cutter Apprenticeship Program is a federally registered, on-the-job training program that develops journey-level meat cutters in small-plant and retail butcher shop environments. Training is conducted during actual production operations at USDA-inspected or state-inspected facilities. Apprentices learn by doing the work under the direct supervision and instruction of a qualified Training Agent.

The program is registered with the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship under 29 CFR Part 29, O*NET-SOC Occupation Code 51-3021.00 — All-Round Butcher (MEAT CUTTER). Federal registration means the program meets national standards for structured apprenticeship training. Apprentices who complete the program earn a nationally recognized Journeyman credential issued through the DOL.

Two-Phase Structure

The program is organized into two phases. Phase 1 builds foundational competency in meat cutting and retail operations. Phase 2 builds journey-level competency in advanced processing, production management, and food safety systems. Apprentices must complete Phase 1 before advancing to Phase 2.

Phase	Description
Phase 1	Certificate in Meat Cutting / Custom & Retail Operations — 8 sections, 1,900 OJT hours minimum, 144+ RTI hours minimum
Phase 2	Journey-Level Certification / Advanced Processing & Production — 7 sections, 2,100 OJT hours minimum, 144+ RTI hours minimum
Total Program	4,000 OJT hours 288+ RTI hours minimum Approximately 2 years

Phase 1 — Sections and OJT Hour Allocations

Section	Title	OJT Hours
Section 1	Sanitation & SSOP	160
Section 2	Inspection & Grading	120
Section 3	Knife Care & Safety	120
Section 4	Lamb Breaking, Custom Cutting & Grind Allocation	220
Section 5	Pork Breaking, Custom Cutting & Grind Management	380
Section 6	Beef Breaking, Custom Cutting & Grind Operations	540
Section 7	Poultry Fabrication (Optional)	100
Section 8	Packaging & Labeling	260
Phase 1 Total		1,900

Phase 2 — Sections and OJT Hour Allocations

Section	Title	OJT Hours
Section 1	Harvest / Humane Handling	450
Section 2	Fresh Sausage Production	250
Section 3	Smoked Meats & Curing	350
Section 4	Meat Merchandising	200
Section 5	Cutting Tests & Yield Analysis	250
Section 6	Profitability / Markup % & Inventory Controls	200
Section 7	Food Safety Systems / HACCP	400
Phase 2 Total		2,100

OJT Hours Are Minimums

The OJT hours listed for each section are minimums, not schedules. The apprentice must accumulate at least the listed hours in each section before sitting for the written examination. If more time is needed to reach the required competency standard, take it. A section is not complete until the apprentice demonstrates the competencies — the hours are a floor, not a finish line.

Phase 2 Section 1 — Non-Harvest Facility Note

Phase 2 Section 1 covers Harvest and Humane Handling. This section applies only to facilities that conduct slaughter operations. If your facility does not harvest, the 350 OJT hours allocated to Section 1 are redirected to other Phase 2 sections under an approved protocol. The Training Director must authorize and document this redirect before it takes effect. Contact program administration for the current redirect procedure.

SECTION 2 — YOUR ROLE AS TRAINING AGENT

Who You Are

As a Training Agent, you are typically the shop owner or manager of a USDA-inspected or state-inspected meat processing or butcher shop facility. You are an experienced meat cutter who knows the craft. You do not need to be a licensed HACCP professional, a certified educator, or a regulatory expert to be a Training Agent. You need to know the work, be willing to structure your production environment around training, and commit to the documentation requirements the program requires.

You Are a Floor Facilitator, Not a Lecturer

Your job is not to stand in front of an apprentice and deliver classroom instruction. Your job is to use daily production situations as opportunities to build and test competency. The apprentice learns by doing the work and by explaining what they are doing and why. You create the conditions for that learning, observe the work, ask the questions, and evaluate the results.

The apprentice curriculum contains all instructional content. The apprentice reads it on their own time. When you get to the production floor together, your job is to apply it — not repeat it. The Training Agent Manual for each section tells you exactly what to prepare, what to assign, what to observe, and what to ask.

Your Three Core Responsibilities

Responsibility	What It Requires
Deliver Instruction	Facilitate each topic using the Training Agent Manual. Assign production tasks that develop the competencies in the curriculum. Use discussion questions to test understanding in real time on the floor.
Verify Competency	Observe the apprentice’s work against the competency standards defined in the OJT Competency Verification form. Score honestly using the 0–3 scale. Do not advance the apprentice until the standard is met.
Administer Assessments	Manage the assessment package securely. Confirm required reading completion before administering the written examination. Complete all records accurately and retain them as required by the program.

What You Are Not Expected to Be

You are not expected to have formal HACCP certification, a food science degree, or prior experience running an apprenticeship program. You are expected to know the production environment, apply the facilitation tools provided in the Training Agent Manual, and hold the apprentice to the program’s competency standards. The program is designed so that a working shop owner or manager can deliver it without stopping production.

Training the Trainer — The Dual Audience Principle

Every document in the NWMPA program is written for two readers at the same time. The Apprentice Curriculum is written for the apprentice — a developing meat cutter who needs to understand the work through a formal food safety and production lens. The Training Agent Manual is written for you — an experienced operator who needs practical floor prompts, not theory.

Understanding this distinction helps you use the documents correctly. The curriculum is the apprentice’s reference. The Training Agent Manual is yours. They work together, but they are not interchangeable. Do not hand the apprentice your Training Agent Manual. Do not use the apprentice curriculum as your facilitation script.

Facility Requirements

Training must be conducted at a USDA-inspected or state-inspected meat processing or butcher shop facility. The production environment is the training environment. The apprentice must have access to the equipment, conditions, and regulatory context relevant to each section being trained. If your facility does not support a specific section's content, contact program administration before starting that section.

Apprentice Eligibility

Eligibility to enroll in the NWMPA Journeyman Meat Cutter Apprenticeship Program is determined by you as the Training Agent. You are responsible for assessing whether an individual is a suitable candidate for apprenticeship at your facility. Consider the candidate's work ethic, reliability, physical capability to perform the work, and commitment to completing a multi-year program. Once you accept an apprentice into the program, you take on the training, documentation, and compliance obligations described throughout this guide for the duration of their enrollment.

For information on the probationary period that applies at the start of the apprenticeship — including the terms under which either party may exit the agreement during that period — refer to the NWMPA 2026 Apprenticeship Handbook. The probationary period is defined in detail in that document.

SECTION 3 — THE THREE-DOCUMENT PACKAGE

How the Documents Work Together

Every section of the NWMPA program produces three printed documents. Each document is printed separately and used by a specific person in a specific role. Understanding what each document contains — and what it does not contain — is essential to running the section correctly.

Document	Contents and Purpose
Document 1 Apprentice Curriculum	The working document the apprentice uses throughout the section. Contains all instructional content, worked examples, discussion questions, learning checkpoints, and required reading assignments. Does not contain Training Agent notes, assessment materials, or answer keys. Given to the apprentice at the start of the section.
Document 2 Training Agent Manual	Your facilitation guide for the section. Contains the Section Readiness Checklist, Topic Completion Tracker, facilitation guide for all topics, condensed glossary, and Quick Reference Card. Does not contain the assessment package. This is your working document — keep it at your workstation.
Document 3 Assessment & Administration Package	Kept secured by you, away from the apprentice at all times until examination is administered. Contains the OJT Competency Verification form, Food Safety Field Worksheet, Written Examination, and Answer Key — Instructor Copy. This document must never be accessible to the apprentice before the examination.

The Quick Reference Card

Each section includes a Quick Reference Card — a single-page, laminate-ready print designed for use on the production floor during active training. For Phase 2 food safety sections, the Quick Reference Card contains all CCPs, critical limits, monitoring frequencies, and corrective action protocols for the HACCP plans active in that section. Post it at the relevant workstation. Use it during production. It is a field tool, not a reference document kept in a binder.

Document Security

Document 3 — the Assessment and Administration Package — must be stored securely and kept entirely separate from the apprentice's materials at all times. The apprentice must never have access to the written examination, the OJT Competency Verification form, or the answer key before the examination is administered. If Document 3 is compromised, contact program administration immediately. A compromised examination cannot be used.

SECTION 4 — REQUIRED READING

How Required Reading Works in This Program

Every section of the NWMPA Apprentice Curriculum requires the apprentice to complete two categories of reading before sitting for the written examination: the Apprentice Curriculum for that section, and assigned chapters from the program's three reference texts. Both are required. Both are tested. The written examination for each section is built from the content of the curriculum and the assigned reference text readings combined, with the curriculum carrying the greater weight.

The three reference texts used across the program are listed below with purchasing information. All three are the apprentice's responsibility to purchase at their own expense before beginning Phase 1. Direct your apprentice to this information at program enrollment.

Book 1 — The Meat We Eat, 14th Edition

ISBN: 978-0-8134-3175-8

Price: Approximately \$105 list price. Used copies available at significant discounts.

Where to Buy: Amazon.com (search by ISBN: 978-0-8134-3175-8) — AbeBooks.com — ThriftBooks.com

Book 2 — Meat Science Laboratory Manual, 9th Edition

ISBN: 978-0-89641-608-6

Price: \$54.95 including shipping.

Where to Buy: American Press Publishers — americanpresspublishers.com. Order directly from the publisher.

Note: Do not rely on Amazon or other retail platforms for this title — availability through third-party sellers is unreliable. Order directly from the publisher.

Book 3 — The Meat Buyers Guide, 8th Edition or Higher (IMPS/NAMP)

Price: Used copies approximately \$50–\$150 depending on condition. New editions: contact AMSA for current pricing.

Where to Buy: Used (8th Edition) — Amazon.com or eBay.com (search "Meat Buyers Guide 8th edition"). New (current edition) — American Meat Science Association (AMSA) at meatscience.org.

Note: Reading assignments are based on the 8th edition chapter structure. Any edition from the 8th onward is acceptable. AMSA is expected to publish a 10th edition in the near future — check meatscience.org for current availability before purchasing.

Specific reference text assignments are listed in Section 5 — Required Reading of each Apprentice Curriculum document. These assignments are section-specific and change with each section to match the technical content being evaluated.

The Apprentice's Reading Responsibility

Both categories of reading are the apprentice's responsibility, completed on their own time. This is the federal standard for Related Technical Instruction (RTI) in a registered apprenticeship program. RTI is the off-the-job learning component that supports what is practiced on the production floor.

The apprentice is expected to read through the full Apprentice Curriculum for the section and complete the assigned reference text chapters before the written examination is administered. The curriculum is the primary study material — it contains the instructional content, worked examples, and scenarios that form the foundation of the exam. The reference text readings provide the technical depth that supports and reinforces that content.

The apprentice should arrive at each production session having engaged with the curriculum content for the topics being covered that shift. Your job on the floor is to apply that knowledge — not introduce it for the first time.

At the start of each section, hand the apprentice their copy of the Apprentice Curriculum and direct them to read through it in full, and to Section 5 — Required Reading for the reference text assignments. Make clear that both must be completed before the written examination will be administered.

Your Role in Managing Reading

You do not grade or test the reading directly. Your role is to confirm that both the curriculum and the required reference text readings were completed, and to certify that confirmation before the examination is administered. The Apprentice Curriculum includes language requiring the apprentice to certify completion of both reading requirements with you. This certification is part of the examination administration record.

Do not administer the written examination until the apprentice has confirmed completion of both the curriculum and the required reference text readings. If an apprentice arrives on the floor clearly unprepared — unable to engage with basic curriculum content — redirect them to complete the reading before facilitation continues for that topic.

RTI Hours

The time the apprentice spends reading the curriculum and the required reference text chapters counts toward the program's RTI hour requirement. The program requires a minimum of 144+ RTI hours per phase. RTI is separate from OJT hours and is tracked independently. The method for logging RTI hours is defined in the program's Standards of Apprenticeship. Contact program administration if you have questions about RTI documentation.

SECTION 5 — DELIVERING OJT ON THE PRODUCTION FLOOR

Training Happens During Production

OJT in this program does not happen in a separate training session pulled out of the production day. It happens during actual production operations. You integrate training into the work that is already happening. The apprentice does production tasks. You observe, prompt, question, and evaluate. This model is deliberate — it produces competency that transfers directly to independent work because it was never separated from that work.

How to Use the Facilitation Guide

The Training Agent Manual for each section contains a facilitation guide with one entry per topic. Every entry follows the same five-panel format. Use it before the shift and during production — it is designed to be readable in the few minutes before the day starts.

Panel	What It Covers and How to Use It
Topic Header	States the topic number, title, and one sentence on why it matters on the floor. Read this first. It orients you before you look at anything else.
Before Production	Two to four action items: what to have ready, what to check, what to brief the apprentice on before the shift. Complete these before the day starts.
During Production	Active floor prompts. Tasks to assign, observations to make, questions to ask in real time. Use these mid-shift without stopping to read a paragraph.
What to Look For	The specific indicators that tell you the apprentice understands the material and is building genuine competency — not just completing a task. This is your evaluation guide.
Regulatory Anchor	The specific regulatory reference that applies to this topic. Know it. If an inspector asks the apprentice about it, the apprentice should be able to answer.

The Section Readiness Checklist

Before starting any section, complete the Section Readiness Checklist printed in the Training Agent Manual for that section. The checklist confirms that prerequisites are met, active HACCP plans are in place, required equipment is available, calibration is current, and records are ready. Do not start a section if the checklist cannot be completed. A section started without the right conditions cannot be completed to standard.

The Topic Completion Tracker

The Topic Completion Tracker is a one-page grid in the Training Agent Manual listing every topic in the section with a date-completed column and an initials column. Check off each topic only when the apprentice has demonstrated the required competency for that topic — not when you have delivered instruction on it. These are two different things. A topic is not complete because you covered it. It is complete because the apprentice can demonstrate it.

Learning Checkpoints

Each topic in the Apprentice Curriculum ends with a Learning Checkpoint — a short set of questions the apprentice completes independently, without notes or reference material. The Learning Checkpoint is a self-check, not a graded assessment. Before facilitating the Discussion Questions for any topic, ask the apprentice to complete the Learning Checkpoint on their own. Review their answers. Address any gap directly on the floor using the production context. Then proceed to Discussion Questions.

The Four Apprentice Characters

The Apprentice Curriculum uses four named characters — Hunter, Sheri, Callen, and Taylor — who appear throughout scenarios, worked examples, and discussion questions. These characters represent the kinds of situations apprentices encounter on the production floor. When the Training Agent Manual references one of these characters, it is connecting your floor facilitation to a specific scenario in the curriculum. The characters are not locked to specific stations — they rotate through different roles.

Pacing Guidance

You control the pace of training within the section. OJT hour minimums are floors. Move through topics at the pace the apprentice's development requires. Some topics will go quickly. Others — particularly those involving regulatory documentation, HACCP plan execution, or complex fabrication technique — will require more time. Do not compress training to meet a schedule. The apprentice must be able to demonstrate the competency before you move on.

SECTION 6 — ASSESSMENT & RECORD-KEEPING

The Three Assessment Instruments

Every section ends with three assessment instruments, all contained in Document 3 — the Assessment and Administration Package. Each instrument has a specific purpose and a specific sequence. Do not administer them out of order.

Instrument	Purpose and Sequence
OJT Competency Verification	Completed by you throughout the section as the apprentice demonstrates competency in each category. This is an ongoing evaluation, not a single event at the end. Score each category using the 0–3 scale as the work is performed. A minimum score of 2 in every category is required before the written examination may be administered.
Food Safety Field Worksheet	A structured field record completed during production for sections with active HACCP plans. Documents that the apprentice can identify, monitor, and respond to critical control points in real time on the floor. Completed as part of active production, not after the fact.
Written Examination	50-question examination administered after the OJT Competency Verification is complete and required readings are certified. Administered by you in a controlled setting, away from production. The apprentice completes it independently without notes or reference materials. The passing standard is 80%. An apprentice who scores below 80% may not advance to the next section. Identify the areas of deficiency, provide additional floor time and study, and re-administer the examination before proceeding.

The 0–3 Scoring Scale

The OJT Competency Verification uses a four-point scale. Apply it consistently.

Score	Meaning
3 — Exceeds Standard	The apprentice performs the competency independently, accurately, and with the kind of judgment and efficiency that reflects journey-level work.
2 — Meets Standard	The apprentice performs the competency independently and accurately. This is the minimum passing standard in every category.
1 — Needs Improvement	The apprentice performs the competency with errors, inconsistency, or requires prompting. Do not advance. Identify the specific gap, provide targeted floor time, and re-evaluate.
0 — Not Demonstrated	The apprentice has not yet performed the competency or cannot perform it at this time. Do not advance.

Before You Administer the Written Examination

Confirm the following before administering the written examination. All three conditions must be met.

- The OJT Competency Verification is complete with a minimum score of 2 in every category.
- The apprentice has certified completion of the required readings listed in Section 5 of the Apprentice Curriculum.

- The Food Safety Field Worksheet is complete for sections where it applies.

Administering the Examination

Administer the written examination in a controlled setting, separate from the production floor. The apprentice completes the examination independently — no notes, no reference materials, no access to the curriculum. You are present to ensure examination integrity. Time the examination as specified in the administration instructions printed in Document 3. Do not discuss examination content with the apprentice before, during, or after administration.

Examination Re-Attempt Protocol

If the apprentice scores below 80% on the written examination, do not advance to the next section. There is no limit on the number of re-attempts. However, a minimum of one week must pass between each examination attempt. Use that week to identify the areas where the apprentice scored below standard, provide targeted floor time and additional study time on those topics, and confirm the apprentice is ready before re-administering. Document every attempt — date, score, and the corrective action taken between attempts — and retain those records with the section file.

Record-Keeping

Maintain complete records for every section the apprentice completes. Records must be retained as required by the program's Standards of Apprenticeship and applicable DOL regulations. At a minimum, retain the following for each section:

- Completed OJT Competency Verification form with scores, dates, and your signature
- Completed Food Safety Field Worksheet where applicable
- Completed written examination with apprentice name, date, and score
- Topic Completion Tracker with dates and initials
- Required reading certification confirmation

Section Certification and Journeyman Recognition

When all section requirements are complete — OJT hours met, competency verified, examination passed — complete the Section Certification document for that section. The Section Certification requires your signature as Training Agent and constitutes the formal record that the apprentice has satisfied all requirements for that section. Upon completion of all Phase 2 sections, the Journeyman Recognition block in the final Section Certification is completed and submitted to program administration for DOL credential processing.

SECTION 7 — DOL REGISTRATION & COMPLIANCE

Federal Registration

The NWMPA Journeyman Meat Cutter Apprenticeship Program is registered directly with the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship under 29 CFR Part 29. It is not registered through the Oregon or Washington State Apprenticeship Agencies. The DOL Office of Apprenticeship is the sole registration authority for this program.

Federal registration means this program operates under a DOL-approved Standards of Apprenticeship document. That document defines the program structure, OJT and RTI requirements, competency standards, and the obligations of both the Training Agent and the apprentice. As a Training Agent, you are a party to that registered program. Your documentation practices and training delivery must conform to the standards defined in it.

What Federal Registration Means for You

Federal registration creates documentation obligations. The program's OJT hours, RTI hours, competency records, and section certifications are not internal paperwork — they are program records that may be subject to DOL review. Keep them accurate, complete, and retained for the period specified in the Standards of Apprenticeship.

Federal registration also means the apprentice earns a nationally recognized Journeyman credential upon program completion — not a local certificate. That credential has value precisely because the program it represents meets a federal standard. Your documentation is what substantiates it.

OJT and RTI Documentation Obligations

Requirement	Your Obligation
OJT Hours	Track and record the apprentice's OJT hours by section. Hours must meet or exceed the minimums listed in the program structure. Log hours as they are worked. Do not reconstruct hours after the fact.
RTI Hours	Track the apprentice's completion of Related Technical Instruction. Required readings and curriculum study constitute RTI. Minimum 144+ RTI hours per phase. Retain documentation of RTI completion as specified in the Standards of Apprenticeship.
Competency Records	Retain all completed OJT Competency Verification forms, Food Safety Field Worksheets, and written examinations. These are the primary evidence that the apprentice met the program standard.
Section Certifications	Complete and retain a signed Section Certification for each completed section. These are submitted to program administration as part of the credential process.

Safety and Workers' Compensation

Apprentices work in a meat processing environment that involves saws, knives, grinders, slippery surfaces, and cold temperatures. As a Training Agent and employer, you are responsible for maintaining a safe working environment that meets the requirements of your state's occupational safety regulations and the OSHA General Duty Clause (29 U.S.C. § 654). Workers' compensation coverage for apprentices is governed by your individual state's requirements and is a matter between you and the apprentice. Contact your state's labor department or workers' compensation authority for the specific requirements that apply to your facility and apprenticeship arrangement.

Progressive Wages, Apprentice Departure, and Other Employment Matters

Federally registered apprenticeship programs under 29 CFR Part 29 include employment-related obligations such as progressive wage schedules and procedures for handling an apprentice who leaves or is terminated mid-program. These matters are defined in detail in the NWMPA 2026 Apprenticeship Handbook. Review that document before enrolling your first apprentice. If an apprentice leaves your program for any reason — voluntary or otherwise — contact program administration immediately to determine the correct documentation and notification steps.

Key Regulatory References Active in This Program

The following federal regulations are referenced throughout the NWMPA curriculum and are active in the production environments where training occurs. You do not need to be a regulatory expert, but you should know these references and be able to locate the relevant requirements when needed.

Regulation	Subject
9 CFR Part 313	Humane Handling of Livestock
9 CFR Part 310	Slaughter of Livestock
9 CFR Part 416	Sanitation Performance Standards
9 CFR Part 417	HACCP Systems (Hazard Analysis, CCPs, Corrective Actions, Verification, Records)
9 CFR Part 317	Labeling, Marking Devices, and Containers
9 CFR Part 424	Preparation of Cured Products
21 CFR Part 101	Food Labeling
21 CFR Part 117	Current GMPs / Preventive Controls
29 CFR Part 29	Federal Apprenticeship Standards — Program Registration
29 U.S.C. § 654	OSHA General Duty Clause — Workplace Safety

SECTION 8 — HOW TO START EACH SECTION

Step-by-Step: From Receiving the Package to Completing the Section

Follow this sequence every time you begin a new section with an apprentice. It applies to every section in Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Step 1	Receive the three-document package for the section. Confirm you have Document 1 (Apprentice Curriculum), Document 2 (Training Agent Manual), and Document 3 (Assessment & Administration Package). Secure Document 3 immediately. Do not leave it accessible to the apprentice.
Step 2	Read the Training Agent Manual for the section — specifically the How to Use This Manual page and the Section Readiness Checklist — before you do anything else.
Step 3	Complete the Section Readiness Checklist in the Training Agent Manual. Confirm prerequisites, equipment, calibration status, active HACCP plans, and records readiness. Do not start training until the checklist is complete.
Step 4	Give the apprentice their copy of the Apprentice Curriculum. Direct them to the Section Contents, the Required Reading section (Section 5), and the first topic. Make clear that required readings must be completed before the written examination is administered.
Step 5	Review the facilitation guide for the first topic. Use the Before Production panel to prepare for your first training shift.
Step 6	Begin training on the production floor. Assign the tasks in the During Production panel. Observe against the What to Look For criteria. Use the Discussion Questions in the Apprentice Curriculum to test understanding.
Step 7	At the end of each topic, confirm the apprentice completed the Learning Checkpoint independently. Address any gaps before moving on.
Step 8	Log completion on the Topic Completion Tracker only when the apprentice has demonstrated the competency for that topic.
Step 9	Continue through all topics in the section. Score the OJT Competency Verification categories as competency is demonstrated during production.
Step 10	When all topics are complete, all OJT hours are met, all Competency Verification categories score 2 or above, and required readings are certified, administer the written examination. The apprentice must achieve a passing score of 80% or above. If the apprentice scores below 80%, do not advance to the next section. Identify the areas of deficiency, provide additional floor time and study time, and re-administer the examination.
Step 11	Complete the Section Certification. Submit to program administration. Retain your copies of all records.

If the Apprentice Is Not Progressing

If an apprentice is not meeting the competency standard in a topic after reasonable floor time, do not advance and do not administer the examination. Identify the specific gap, provide additional targeted floor time focused on that gap, and re-evaluate. Document the additional training time. If the apprentice continues to struggle, contact program administration to discuss options before making any changes to the training plan.

Where to Direct Questions

Questions about program administration, DOL registration, Standards of Apprenticeship language, section sequencing, or credential processing should be directed to program administration through NWMPA. Questions about specific curriculum content or technical subject matter should be resolved using the Apprentice Curriculum, the Training Agent Manual, and the regulatory references listed in Section 7 of this guide. For questions about employment obligations, progressive wages, probationary period terms, apprentice departure procedures, and workers' compensation, refer to the NWMPA 2026 Apprenticeship Handbook.

SECTION 9 — PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

Complete Program Summary

Phase	Section Title	OJT Hours	RTI Hours	Status
PHASE 1 — Certificate in Meat Cutting / Custom & Retail Operations				
P1-S1	Sanitation & SSOP	160	Included	
P1-S2	Inspection & Grading	120	Included	
P1-S3	Knife Care & Safety	120	Included	
P1-S4	Lamb Breaking, Custom Cutting & Grind Allocation	220	Included	
P1-S5	Pork Breaking, Custom Cutting & Grind Management	380	Included	
P1-S6	Beef Breaking, Custom Cutting & Grind Operations	540	Included	
P1-S7	Poultry Fabrication (Optional)	100	Included	
P1-S8	Packaging & Labeling	260	Included	
P1 Total		1,900	144+ min	
PHASE 2 — Journey-Level Certification / Advanced Processing & Production				
P2-S1	Harvest / Humane Handling *	450	Included	
P2-S2	Fresh Sausage Production	250	Included	
P2-S3	Smoked Meats & Curing	350	Included	
P2-S4	Meat Merchandising	200	Included	
P2-S5	Cutting Tests & Yield Analysis	250	Included	
P2-S6	Profitability / Markup % & Inventory Controls	200	Included	
P2-S7	Food Safety Systems / HACCP	400	Included	
P2 Total		2,100	144+ min	
TOTAL	<i>Approximately 2 years</i>	4,000	288+ min	

* Phase 2 Section 1 applies to harvest facilities only. Non-harvest facilities redirect the 350 OJT hours per the approved program protocol. Contact program administration to initiate.