



Maximizing Workforce Pell Grants to Deliver Value for Students and Employers



Colleges are increasingly turning to certificate programs to deliver in-demand training and prepare students for employment opportunities. Though bachelor's and associate degrees typically have stronger long-term outcomes for students, high-quality certificates can provide valuable skills at an affordable price. The new federal Workforce Pell financial aid program can accelerate the growth of high-quality, short-term certificate programs, as long as state leaders are equipped to implement the program in ways that maximize value to constituents and employers.

Certificate programs make up only 4% of total college enrollments, but they are growing nearly twice as fast as associate degree programs.¹ Many of these programs are long-term certificates, that is, certificates that require a year or more of coursework. Short-term certificates can be completed in less than 1 year. Of the more than 1 million students who earned a certificate in 2023-24, 45% earned long-term certificates. Another 46% earned short-term certificates that took 3 to 12 months to complete. The final 9% earned short-term certificates that took less than 3 months to complete.² While the Pell Grant already provides aid for both long-term certificates and short-term certificates of 15 weeks or more, the Workforce Pell Grant will cover programs that take 8 to 15 weeks to complete.

Research indicates that Workforce Pell will lead to more students enrolling in and completing certificate programs.³ This can be a boon to local economies, depending on the programs students enroll in. Certificate programs can be rapidly scaled and quickly created or adjusted to meet workforce needs. Yet this flexibility and instability can come at the expense of quality. **Previous research has shown that some certificates pay off while many others provide no economic benefit.⁴ Rigorous quality assurance is needed to protect students and taxpayers from low-quality certificate programs.**

In fact, the U.S. Department of Education found that, after assessing an experimental form of Workforce Pell that did not have the strong quality controls described in this brief, students "did not increase employment or earnings in the medium to long term."⁵ While high-quality certificate programs can set students up for career success, low-quality programs can have the opposite effect, wasting students' time at taxpayers' expense.

State policymakers have a critical opportunity to maximize outcomes: Governors play a key role in determining which programs are eligible for Workforce Pell. To protect students and taxpayers and maximize economic outcomes, state leaders should establish a high bar for programs to participate in Workforce Pell, evaluating certificate programs on measures like [economic value and ROI](#). Policymakers should also adopt policies that prohibit predatory practices, support robust data systems, and engage researchers to evaluate these policies.

THE PELL GRANT AND THE WORKFORCE PELL GRANT

The federal Pell Grant is offered to students with financial need who are pursuing an undergraduate credential. It is not a loan. The Pell Grant resembles a voucher program: Students apply for financial aid and may use the aid at a college of their choice, provided the college meets certain eligibility requirements. The amount of funding a student receives varies depending on factors like financial need and the number of courses they enroll in, and it is currently capped at \$7,395 per year. Students also have lifetime caps and must meet performance standards to renew their eligibility from year to year.

Historically, Pell Grants could only be used for programs that are at least 600 clock hours and last at least 15 weeks. Workforce Pell Grants can be used for programs that are as short as 150 hours and 8 weeks, provided the programs meet certain state and federal criteria related to price, student outcomes, and workforce alignment. These shorter timelines and additional criteria are what distinguish Workforce Pell from "traditional" Pell. The Pell Grant program awards roughly \$32 billion a year, and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates \$300 million annually will go to Workforce Pell.^{6,7}

For years, the idea of opening Pell to shorter programs enjoyed bipartisan support but floundered over debates on how to balance market competition with protecting taxpayers and students from wasting funds on low-performing or predatory programs. Those concerns are well-warranted: From 2012 to 2017, the U.S. Department of Education ran an experimental pilot on Pell for 8-15-week certificate programs.⁸ The pilot resulted in increased enrollment in and completion rates of short-term programs, though it did not result in statistically significant changes to "employment or earnings in the medium to long term."⁹ Congress ultimately created Workforce Pell in 2025 and left much of the Workforce Pell quality control and consumer protections to the states.



FEDERAL MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR WORKFORCE PELL PROGRAMS

The federal rules for Workforce Pell set a floor for eligibility. State policymakers should build on these minimum requirements and align them to state needs:

- A program must:
 - › Be 150 to 599 clock hours of instruction, or the equivalent in credit hours (i.e., 4 to 15 credits for colleges using a semester calendar)
 - › Be 8 to 15 weeks long
 - › Not be a correspondence course or study abroad program
- Governors, in consultation with state Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) boards, determine whether the program:
 - › Is aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations as established in accordance with the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and WIOA
 - › Meets the hiring requirements of potential employers in the above sectors or occupations
 - › Is stackable and portable across employers, unless the occupation has only one recognized credential
 - › Prepares students for a related certificate or degree program, including by ensuring that completers will receive academic credit that counts towards the program requirements
- The U.S. Secretary of Education determines whether the program:
 - › Has been offered for at least one year before seeking approval
 - › Meets a 70% completion rate within 150% of the program's normal length, as calculated and reported by the state
 - › Meets a 70% job placement rate within 180 days of completion, as calculated and reported by the state
 - › Has published tuition and fees that do not exceed the value-added earnings. Value-added earnings are the difference between a) the median earnings of program completers one year after completion, adjusted by state and metropolitan area regional price parities based on the location of the program; and b) 150% of the poverty line. (Median earnings will not be adjusted if most program completers live out of state.)

Why states must strengthen Workforce Pell eligibility requirements

Students can use Workforce Pell for approved short-term certificate programs only. To become authorized, programs must be nominated by governors and certified by the U.S. Department of Education. Federal law sets a national floor for program eligibility but leaves governors responsible for further aligning eligibility with specific state needs. Many states are already experienced with tailoring financial aid for high-demand programs, offering assistance to aspiring doctors, nurses, teachers, linemen, CDL drivers, and more.^{10, 11} State leaders should make the most of this federal investment by establishing rigorous requirements that best meet the needs of their constituents and local businesses.

State leadership is especially important for Workforce Pell because federal accountability is somewhat lacking for undergraduate certificate programs. Congress mandates that undergraduate degree programs, but not certificate programs, must prove that their graduates earn at least as much as someone with only a high school diploma.¹² Instead, certificate programs are typically monitored by an executive branch policy known as Gainful Employment, but this policy has a history of changing from one presidential administration to the next, and it may be less likely to persist.¹³

Recognizing the need for greater accountability, federal rules require that governors must develop and publish written policies and methodologies for how they will determine program eligibility for Workforce Pell. This process ensures state leaders will be accountable to the public. Employers, workers, and journalists will be able to easily review governors' choices and ask hard questions if Workforce Pell leaves too many students in low-value programs.

The need for rigorous, workforce-aligned requirements is clear. Some short-term certificate programs may have a strong return on investment, but many do not. A lack of outcomes data and lack of guardrails can leave too many people in low-quality certificate programs. Without strong implementation of Workforce Pell, these students will spend time and money on programs

with low value and low ROI, while tax dollars are spent on programs that contribute little to the state economy. Training providers are certain to chase after Workforce Pell dollars by launching new certificates or repackaging old ones. Because students can enroll in these programs at taxpayers' expense, it might be a long wait before market forces push out low-quality programs, if ever. Moreover, these students may use up much of their Pell lifetime eligibility on these programs, leaving them unable to use Pell funds on high-quality training programs. Students could be left struggling to find employment and feeling ripped off by governor-endorsed programs. Governors and state leaders should take action to ensure they have robust data, rigorous approval processes, and strong consumer protections for Workforce Pell.

Recommendations for state policymakers

Governors, legislators, and state agencies have several ways to address challenges from implementing and sustaining the Workforce Pell Grant program.

ADOPT RIGOROUS ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS THAT ALIGN WITH STATE NEEDS

- **Governors should set requirements that align with state needs and reflect industry realities.**
 - One way that states can strengthen Workforce Pell consumer protections and improve workforce alignment is to use Credential of Value (COV) frameworks when determining program eligibility. COV frameworks are ways of looking at outcomes data to determine which credentials (bachelor's, associates, or certificates) at which institutions provide adequate value to students. By looking at metrics like student earnings and return on investment, policymakers can create clarity for providers and give confidence to consumers. For more information, see AV's brief on [Credentials of Value](#).
 - For example, governors can strengthen the job placement requirements. The federal minimum requires that 70% of students get a job within 6 months of completing the program, but state policymakers can go further by shortening that timeframe, by ensuring that the jobs are directly related to what students studied, and by only counting jobs that pay an adequate amount — such as at least as much as what the median high school graduate earns. In some industries, a 70% job placement is quite low. Moreover, students who are working while taking classes should not be counted unless the program helps them land a higher-paying job.
 - Governors can further strengthen employment outcomes by only including programs that prepare students for jobs that are both high-wage **and** in-demand, going beyond the federal floor of high-wage **or** in-demand.
 - States can learn from the WIOA process and establish a higher bar for quality. Under WIOA, training programs can receive federal funding if state leaders put them on an Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Too often, ETPL requirements are a low bar. States fail to add rigorous requirements on top of the ETPL minimums. The ETPL experience shows that it can be difficult to raise the bar and remove low-quality programs once the process has become entrenched. With Workforce Pell, state policymakers risk repeating the same challenges. The ETPL experience shows that it can be difficult to raise the bar and remove low-quality programs once the process has become entrenched. To avoid that risk, states should be wary of defaulting to the bare minimum federal standards. Policymakers can use the ETPL process as a template for creating eligible Workforce Pell lists, but they should make sure that Workforce Pell is synonymous with quality in the eyes of employers and students.
 - State leaders have other examples to draw on: Several states have financial aid programs that cover certificate programs only in select, usually high-demand fields, like the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship, the Indiana Workforce Ready Grant, the Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship, or the Kansas Promise Act Scholarship.^{14, 15, 16, 17} Campuses like Ohio's Lorain County Community College have programs that can be easily adapted to Workforce Pell.¹⁸ Not all state high-demand aid programs have sufficiently rigorous eligibility requirements, but they can provide lessons to other states on navigating coalitions and troubleshooting technical challenges.

- **Governors should develop written policies and methodologies that are clear, easily updated, and easily accessible.**

- Governors are required to develop and publish written policies and methodologies for determining program eligibility for Workforce Pell. Policymakers should avoid jargon and ensure that Workforce Pell documentation and policies can be clearly understood and easily accessed by agencies, colleges, employers from multiple industries, laypeople, and other stakeholders. Moreover, these policies and methodologies should be crafted in ways that allow for regular updates as economic conditions change. Governors should apply these principles to the following documents that they are required to publish or furnish for publication:
 - The methodology for determining and reviewing which occupations and industries are high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand
 - A written policy for determining whether a program meets the hiring requirements of these occupations and industries
 - A written policy for determining if a certificate is stackable and portable, with documented connections to additional certificates or degrees, and, if available, information on how many students obtained those additional certificates or degrees
 - A written policy for ensuring that students in a Workforce Pell program receive academic credit that counts towards an additional certificate or degree
 - Other information or documentation as needed or requested by the U.S. Secretary of Education, such as certifying job placement data
 - As applicable, bilateral agreements between states related to the approval and oversight of online Workforce Pell programs across state lines or related to the sharing of job placement and wage data between states

COORDINATE WITH STAKEHOLDERS

- **Governors should establish a cross-sector working group to recommend which certificate programs should be eligible for Workforce Pell.**

- At a minimum, governors are legally required to consult with state WIOA boards when determining program eligibility for Workforce Pell. However, they should also consult with additional constituencies, including state higher education agencies, businesses, employers, labor, and higher education institutions. Workforce Pell represents a new state-federal partnership and a growing coordination between education and workforce entities. To avoid blind spots, encourage bold thinking, and solidify coalitions, implementation should reflect this broad tent.
- For example, colleges and training providers can be expected to push governors to include their certificate programs in Workforce Pell. Similarly, employers may lobby for the inclusion of certificates that benefit their businesses or industries. By using a clear, rigorous, and data-driven Credential of Value framework, governors can keep Workforce Pell eligibility from becoming watered down amid these pressures.
- Suggested stakeholders include:
 - Governor's office
 - State workforce development board
 - State higher education agency
 - State department of labor
 - State longitudinal data system office
 - Employers
 - Colleges and training providers

- **State leaders should prepare for a difficult implementation period by investing in planning and troubleshooting as well as sharing lessons with other states.**

- › Beginning in 2025, the U.S. Department of Education has undergone significant staffing cuts. Federal leaders have called for the elimination of the department and for moving education policy even further into the states' sphere of control. The department's Office of Federal Student Aid, which manages the Pell Grant, has experienced deep staffing cuts, and experts have raised concerns over its ability to maintain or implement programs.¹⁹ State policymakers, out of prudence, should prepare to implement Workforce Pell alongside a federal agency with a limited capacity. To address this concern, state policymakers should plan to take the lead on Workforce Pell quality control, consumer protections, and technical challenges. State leaders may need to invest more time and money into financial aid management than might have been expected in previous years.

- **Governors should consider entering into multi-state agreements to support students and employers who cross state lines.**

- › Metropolitan and economic areas that span multiple states (e.g., Cincinnati, Fargo, Kansas City, Memphis, Philadelphia) often see students and workers living in one state but studying or working in another. Many states and colleges even offer in-state tuition to students on either side of the border. Because Workforce Pell is a federal program subject to state-level policies, students might find that they can receive Workforce Pell financial aid for a program on one side of a border, but not for an identical program on the other side of the border. This could make it difficult to train enough workers for high-wage, high-skill, or high-demand occupations and industries in multi-state labor sheds. Moreover, governors may struggle to accurately measure the job placement rates and post-completion earnings of students who live across state lines. Finally, online Workforce Pell programs will require additional approvals before they can operate in more than one state.
- › Federal rules allow states to develop bilateral agreements that would harmonize policies in these areas. Governors may enter into bilateral agreements regarding online Workforce Pell programs. State leaders should assess which programs and which areas might benefit from a multi-state data sharing agreement. To make the best possible use of these agreements, states should consider developing shared priorities for certificate programs and establishing interstate education and workforce needs assessments.

ADDRESS TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

- **Policymakers should audit the state's data infrastructure**

- › The federal minimum eligibility requirements, as well as any additional state consumer protections, rely on data. Policymakers will need data on 8-15-week certificate programs, data on the economy, and enough data on the individuals completing these programs to be able to follow them into the workforce. It is unlikely that every state will have all 3 datasets, at least not in ways that best practices would dictate.
 - Certificate program data
 - Data can be spotty on single-season certificates like the 8-15-week programs that Workforce Pell covers.²⁰ Prior to Workforce Pell, many states may have had little reason to collect vast reams of data on these programs and so elected to forego the bureaucracy that comes with government-mandated data collection. After all, short-term certificates are often designed to be agile. If states collect these data at all, then they would be collecting from colleges and training providers. And, while large colleges might have the staffing to collect and store detailed data, small training providers can sometimes lack the capacity.
 - The quality of the data may depend on which state agencies oversee the certificate programs. Certificate programs overseen by state higher education agencies can be expected to have more robust data, as these agencies are often at the forefront of state longitudinal data systems and have the resources to collect student enrollment and completion data at scale. Yet even when data is collected, it might be difficult to parse.

Students frequently earn multiple short-term certificates in a year, further raising questions about the usefulness of some certificates and complicating the data. **State leaders should audit the available data and, as necessary, establish cross-agency task forces to identify gaps in certificate program data and work with colleges and providers to fill the gaps.**

- Economic data
 - Though economic data is plentiful thanks to Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs (and additional federal data, as can be seen in the Census Bureau's Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes (PSEO)²¹), most states can improve their systems to gain better insights into workforce needs. In particular, states can adopt enhanced wage records in their UI systems. Enhanced wage records can show hourly wages instead of just total earnings, show workers' actual workplace location instead of just their corporate headquarters, and show workers' actual occupation instead of just their industry. **If policymakers adopt enhanced wage records, they can improve not just Workforce Pell, but a range of state operations from budget forecasts to economic development projects. Moreover, enhanced wage records will likely become necessary for long-term participation in the Workforce Pell program, as the federal government has indicated that it eventually will require occupation-specific data for calculating the job placement rates.**
- Student-level data
 - Student-level data is typically needed to link education and workforce training programs to outcomes. If states do not have student-level data, they will struggle to know whether students are able to transfer to another college or get a new job. Trying to measure student outcomes without student-level data is like a baseball fan trying to measure player performance without a box score. If a baseball fan wants to know how many home runs Shohei Ohtani has hit in his career, she would not look at how many runs the Dodgers have hit; she would look at player-level data that follows Ohtani across time and across teams.
 - Because college financial aid programs resemble student-level vouchers, state higher education agencies are likely to collect student-level data in the course of business. On the other hand, certificate programs overseen by state departments of labor are more likely to be funded at the program level, rather than at the student level, and so are less likely to collect student-level data. **State leaders can audit their certificate programs to determine available data — and require Workforce Pell programs to collect and report student-level data.**

- **State appropriators should invest in data gaps**

- Once they complete their data audits, state leaders may find that they need to resolve blind spots. States may need to increase expenditures on state infrastructure (especially state longitudinal data systems) and hire additional staff to manage these new data collections. Importantly, some colleges and training providers may need seed funding to beef up their own institutional data systems, so that they can, in turn, submit data to the state system. Though most states have earnings and employment data, many are lacking the student-level, short-term certificate data necessary and may struggle to gather it without additional funding. In effect, Workforce Pell offers federal financial aid if states are willing to invest in the data necessary to ensure it is of high quality. Better data will help states identify more potentially eligible Workforce Pell programs, which in turn could unlock more federal funding for state residents. Yet this investment in data will not just improve the Workforce Pell program: It will give state policymakers actionable information on the fast-growing short-term certificate space. State leaders can use these insights to guide policy development and provide more high-value options to residents. For example, they can use the data to develop new programs that meet workforce needs and fine-tune existing programs to improve ROI for students.

- **State agencies should identify necessary adjustments to financial aid back-office processing**

- › Each year, the U.S. Department of Education, state agencies, and colleges process millions of financial aid applications. Until now, federal financial aid has been relatively agnostic as to what students study. Though the U.S. Department of Education offers additional financial aid to aspiring teachers and many states do the same for programs like teaching and health care, the Pell Grant historically has not made such distinctions.²² Instead, Pell is awarded based on financial need and on more generic characteristics like whether a student is full time or part time. Now, federal financial aid processes will include verification not just of *whether* a student is enrolled, but *in what* they are enrolled. It is unclear how this will impact states, but there are at least 3 likely pain points. The first is upfront verification of whether a student is enrolled in an eligible Workforce Pell program. Because states nominate these programs and are more likely to have relevant data, states may have a role in verifying. State leaders should ensure that processes are in place to do so.
- › The second is on the back end: Financial aid administrators conduct regular audits and reconciliations for Pell Grant disbursements. Because Workforce Pell is contingent not only on whether a student is enrolled, but in which program they are enrolled, college administrators may face an increase in financial discrepancies whenever students switch between Workforce Pell-eligible and non-eligible programs. States may need to support colleges in redesigning these financial aid reconciliation processes.
- › The third potential pain point may come when governors remove programs from the eligible Workforce Pell list. These decisions should be clearly communicated to financial aid offices and to students. Policymakers should consider including a grace period so that students can complete their 8-15-week programs before Workforce Pell eligibility is cut off.

DEVELOP ROBUST COMMUNICATIONS AND SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS

- **Colleges and state agencies should communicate about Workforce Pell to students and potential students**

- › Students deserve to know what their financing options are. Workforce Pell has the potential to steer students into high-wage, high-demand fields,²³ but only if students know about it. States should include Workforce Pell in existing efforts to educate students about financial aid opportunities. Workforce Pell's unique structure, in which some programs are eligible for aid while others are not, may make it more difficult to advertise and communicate. For example, states can conduct outreach campaigns that target recently laid-off workers, residents who dropped out of college, and high school students who are not planning to pursue an associate or bachelor's degree. States should require certificate program providers to inform students about the tradeoffs between using Workforce Pell and traditional Pell.
- › Because these will be state-level decisions, students' access to federal Title IV financial aid will now be partly determined by which state they enroll in. Students who live near state borders — many of whom already receive in-state tuition in both states — might receive conflicting messaging over program eligibility. For example, if Missouri includes lathing certificates in Workforce Pell but Kansas does not, then Kansas residents in the Kansas City area would receive federal benefits if they enrolled in college in Missouri but not if they enrolled in Kansas. Special attention should be taken to provide clarity to these students. (In cases like this, governors may wish to develop interstate agreements as discussed above and clearly communicate these opportunities to students.)

- **Policymakers should adjust state financial aid to ensure it complements Workforce Pell**

- › State leaders should consider how state financial aid programs can be adjusted to complement Workforce Pell. As with other forms of federal financial aid, students must file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to receive the Workforce Pell Grant. Most states and colleges also utilize the FAFSA to disburse state and institutional scholarships. Thus, Workforce Pell might fit seamlessly with existing state aid programs that are already available for 8-15-week programs. States that already provide state aid to 8-15-week programs might wish to consider adjusting their programs to make sure the multiple forms of aid can stack on top of each other in optimal ways. These state aid programs also might benefit from adopting the same rigorous eligibility requirements outlined in this brief. States that do not currently provide state aid to these programs might weigh the pros and cons of coming in alongside Workforce Pell.

- **Policymakers should implement adequate consumer protections**

- › Workforce Pell invites state-level oversight into how federal financial aid is distributed. However, this also means states must provide more scrutiny and develop state-level consumer protections. State leaders must ensure that Workforce Pell-eligible programs meet state workforce needs and leave students better off. Residents who are seeking job training may be in vulnerable positions: they may have been recently laid off or have limited employment options. As training providers pursue Workforce Pell funds and as the U.S. Department of Education steps back, states must adopt robust consumer protections and processes for making sure students are not sold a bill of goods.

- **Colleges and state higher education agencies should explore how Workforce Pell might interact with credit for prior learning**

- › Under federal law, if a student completes a Workforce Pell certificate and subsequently enrolls in a related academic program, the student should receive academic credit for the Workforce Pell certificate that counts toward the related program. If the certificate program is a non-credit (clock hour) program, policymakers should ensure it can be crosswalked for credit. Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) is a process of awarding college credit for learning that takes place outside of the traditional, credit-bearing college course. Policymakers should consider whether and how to align Workforce Pell with CPL policies. Students may benefit from these types of crosswalks. Policymakers should explore this opportunity while making sure CPL does not become a loophole for low-quality programs. For example, students may need consumer protections from non-credit programs that overpromise their ability to translate into credit. Policymakers should also establish processes that ensure that the Workforce Pell certificates transfer — or stack — into longer programs rather than programs of the same length.

REASSESS AND REALIGN

- **Governors should review and reassess eligible certificate programs, in concert with their cross-sector working groups, at least every 2 years**

- › Governors should develop or assign state entities to develop processes for regularly reassessing the programs that are eligible for Workforce Pell. These processes can include stakeholders such as WIOA boards, businesses, employers, labor, and higher education. An annual review can help keep the suite of Workforce Pell-eligible programs aligned with dynamic industries and evolving fields. Such an annual review provides a clear window for when new certificate programs can be added to Workforce Pell and when low-performing ones can be removed.

- **Governors and their cross-sector working groups should consider the needs of local economies when establishing program eligibility requirements**

- › States should consider nominating certificate programs based on local demand and commuting distances rather than on statewide demand. For example, a student earning a certificate in Chicago might not want to move to Peoria, IL, for a new job, while the in-demand industries in El Paso might be different from the in-demand industries in Houston. This regional approach complements the approach that the U.S. Secretary of Education will use to calculate the value-added earnings.

- **Governors and their cross-sector working groups should align program eligibility requirements with employer needs — but not too closely**

- › Ideally, Workforce Pell programs should train residents to quickly move into unfilled, high-paying jobs. Yet if certificate programs are too specific — for example, by providing training to operate a single machine model or work for a single employer — students might have limited employment options. Such certificates can quickly lose value as technology advances. This is especially a risk for 8-15-week certificates, since the condensed course time lends itself to intensive training with a narrow focus. Federal legislation states that certificates should be stackable and portable across employers, though these terms can be difficult to measure. Policymakers should develop methods for making sure certificates lead both to short-term employment and longer-term success.

RECOMMENDED METRICS FOR MAINTAINING A HIGH-QUALITY WORKFORCE PELL SYSTEM

- Setting the Stage: Inputs and Descriptive Data
 - › Students
 - Student identifiers for matching enrollment data with earnings and employment data
 - Student characteristics (e.g., age and previous education)
 - Pre-enrollment earnings of each student
 - Pre-enrollment employment status of each student
 - Current or most recent employer of each student
 - › Programs, Industries, and Occupations
 - Certificate program's subject area, industry, or occupation
 - Certificate program's number of enrollees
 - Certificate program's enrollment capacity
 - List of high-need industries and occupations
 - Estimated job openings, job growth, and wage growth in each industry and occupation
 - List of academic programs to which certificates stack, documented by articulation agreements or other written transfer policies
 - List of employers to which certificates are portable
 - Hiring requirements of a certificate's intended industry or occupation
- Measuring Value: Outcomes Data
 - › Certificate Completions
 - Number and percentage of enrollees who **complete the program** within 150% of normal time (i.e., within 12 to 30 weeks)
 - List of most frequent **reasons given for not completing** (e.g., found employment, finances, moved away)
 - If the program prepares students for a licensure, the number and percentage of enrollees who **sit for the licensure exam and the number and percentage who pass on the first attempt**
 - › Further Education and Training
 - Number and percentage of completers who **receive academic credit**
 - Average and median **amount of academic credit** that completers earn
 - Number and percentage of completers **who transfer** to an accredited postsecondary institution within 2 years
 - Number and percentage of transfer students **who receive transfer credit** for the certificate program, including the number and share of credits they successfully transfer and the level and program length of the program into which they transfer credits
 - Number and percentage of students who have **successfully stacked the certificate** toward another, higher-level credential
 - The postsecondary institutions to which completers transfer
 - The academic outcomes of transfer students (e.g., the share who completed an associate degree, or are still enrolled after 3 years)
 - › Employment
 - Number and percentage of enrollees who find **any employment** within 180 days of completion or of the program's normal end (broken out by completers and non-completers)
 - Number and percentage of enrollees who find **employment in the intended industry or occupation** within 180 days of completion or of the program's normal end (broken out by completers and non-completers)
 - Number and percentage of enrollees who find **employment in a job that requires the certificate** within 180 days of completion or of the program's normal end (broken out by completers and non-completers)
 - Number and percentage of enrollees who were employed at the start of the program and **have changed employers** within 180 days of completion or of the program's normal end (broken out by completers and non-completers)
 - › Economic Value
 - The **median earnings** for enrollees (broken out by completers and non-completers)
 - The difference in **pre- and post- earnings** for enrollees (broken out by completers and non-completers)
 - The difference between the **median earnings for program enrollees and 150% of the poverty line applied to single individuals**
 - The difference between the median earnings for program enrollees and the **median earnings for 25-to-34-year-olds with just a high school diploma**

Conclusion

There is a clear need for governors and state leaders to establish strong eligibility requirements and consumer protections for Workforce Pell. The new initiative represents an opportunity for state leaders to adopt rigorous Credential of Value frameworks and put them into action. By doing so, along with engaging a wide array of stakeholders, tackling technical challenges, and regularly reassessing their eligible Workforce Pell lists, policymakers can implement and manage a program that serves students, employers, and taxpayers.

ENDNOTES

- 1 [Clearinghouse Enrollment Insights Series: Preliminary Fall Enrollment Trends](#)
- 2 [IPEDS](#)
- 3 [The Effects of Expanding Pell Grant Eligibility for Short Occupational Training Programs: Results from the Experimental Sites Initiative](#)
- 4 [Holding-New-Credentials-Accountable-for-Outcomes.pdf](#)
- 5 [The Effects of Expanding Pell Grant Eligibility for Short Occupational Training Programs: New Results on Employment and Earnings from the Experimental Sites Initiative](#)
- 6 [Pell Grant Program Is In Serious Trouble-2025-02-05](#)
- 7 [Reconciliation Recommendations of the House Committee on Education and Workforce | Congressional Budget Office](#)
- 8 [The Effects of Expanding Pell Grant Eligibility for Short Occupational Training Programs: Results from the Experimental Sites Initiative | IES](#)
- 9 [New Research: Short-Term Pell Didn't Increase Employment, Earnings - National College Attainment Network](#)
- 10 [Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship](#)
- 11 [Golden State Teacher Grant \(GSTG\) Program | California Student Aid Commission](#)
- 12 [Text - H.R.1 - 119th Congress \(2025-2026\): One Big Beautiful Bill Act | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#)
- 13 [Education Department finalizes gainful-employment rule](#)
- 14 <https://sams.adhe.edu/Scholarship/Details/AWC>
- 15 [DWD: NextLevel Jobs: Workforce Ready Grant](#)
- 16 [Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship](#)
- 17 [Kansas Promise Act | KCKCC](#)
- 18 [A Ready-Made Model for Workforce Pell](#)
- 19 [Under McMahon, ED Is Diminished but Not Dead, Experts Say](#)
- 20 [ticas.org \(Short Term Certificates in the Shadows\)](#)
- 21 [PSEO Explorer - Census Bureau](#)
- 22 [TEACH Grant Certification | Federal Student Aid](#)
- 23 [The Effects of Expanding Pell Grant Eligibility for Short Occupational Training Programs: Results from the Experimental Sites Initiative | IES](#)

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