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Workforce Pell Overview

March 2026



WFP: Quick explainer

- ▶ Expands Pell Grants to short-term high-quality training programs
- ▶ Program length: 150–600 clock hours and 8 - 15 weeks
 - 4 -16 semester/trimester hours or 6 - 24 quarter hours
 - No correspondence or study abroad courses
- ▶ Student eligibility:
 - ✓ If student already has a Bachelor's degree
 - ✗ Use WFP at more than one institution at a time; student has graduate degree; student already receiving traditional Pell Grant



Why Workforce Pell is important

- ▶ People with low incomes can now use the largest federal student aid grant program to participate in programs that quickly prepare them for in-demand jobs
- ▶ These programs prepare people **for jobs employers are looking to fill**, giving employers access to a pipeline of trained workers, and helps them hire with confidence.



WFP State Requirements

Governors, in consultation with state boards, are responsible for developing a program approval process, including:

How higher education institutions can get their programs reviewed

The data and information institutions must submit for consideration

Ensuring stackability and portability

Meets the hiring requirements of potential employers

WFP State Requirements



Governors must also verify:

Completion Rate: At least 70% of students must complete the program, within 150% of the program's normal time.

Job Placement Rate: At least 70% of completers must be employed after leaving the program.

- Initially measured by employment **(in any job)** in 2nd quarter after program exit.
- Over time, requirements **will tighten** to require employment in the occupation (or related in-demand occupation) the program prepares students for.



Federal rulemaking process

- AHEAD committee negotiated rulemaking sessions in Dec reached **consensus.**
- Public comment period ends April 8.
- Programs can start as soon as July 1, 2026
 - *Final rules before this*



Key components where Department of Ed wants feedback

The proposal to allow eligible institutions to enter into a written arrangement with an ineligible institution or organization for up to 25 percent of an eligible workforce program. Should it be higher? Give examples.



Public comments: Main Themes

- Workforce Pell as a Catalyst for Workforce-Education System Alignment and Improvement
- Support data modernization to strengthen quality and accountability
- Accounting for continued education pathways
- Raising the 25% ineligible partnership rule



Public comments

- Template comments available
- Even if they're not interested in WFP specifically, can illustrate how this impacts the broader workforce system
- Amplifying these comments may cause Department of Education to reconsider key components



A note on timeline

- WP eligibility planned to launch ahead of the 2026-2027 school year (July 1)
- The work necessary to truly adopt and scale WFP **will take a much longer time**, allowing states and Ed to refine and evolve determinations based on early reporting or state feedback.



A note on Pell shortfall

- Expanded eligibility and delayed discretionary funding creates a projected funding shortfall by 2028
- Workforce Pell is not an expensive program
 - projected to cost \$2/3B over 10 years
 - .38% of total Pell funding
- Lawmakers should pass stable and mandatory funding, not limit eligibility or decrease grant amounts



Complementary advocacy

- Truly unlocking economic opportunity for all working people will require more of our workforce systems.
- Supportive services to meet students' holistic needs
- Industry partnerships to truly engage employers
- Data collection and modernization: College
Transparency Act