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Workforce Pell Advisory Group Meeting

May 20, 2026

Attendance

Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez, Deputy Secretary Dr. Patricia Trujillo, Mark Chisholm, Dina Advani, Dr. Becky Rowley, Scott Groginsky, Kathy Steen, Dr. Barbara Medina, Dr. Vanessa Hawker, Dr. Brittany Gallegos, Michael Weinberg, Dr. Mary Ulrich, Rachel Moskowitz, Deputy Secretary Marcos Martinez, Marc Saavedra, Dr. Amber Gallup, Kelly Roepke-Orth, Chris Bullard, Mindi-Kim Schrum, Dr. James Johnston, Daisy Lira, Bernadette Panteah, Nayeli Martinez, and Heather Romero.

1. Future Advisory Group Meeting Times

Mark Chisholm asked whether future Workforce Pell Advisory Group meetings should be moved from the current time slot to 1:30–3:00 p.m. Dr. Mary Ulrich indicated that the proposed time would work for Doña Ana Community College but noted that a substitute representative may occasionally need to attend. Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez confirmed that institutions may designate an alternate representative provided HED is notified in advance.

2. NGA Meeting and Final Rule Updates

Mark Chisholm reported that Dr. Brittany Gallegos, Heather Romero, and Scott Groginsky attended the National Governors Association Workforce Pell meeting and shared key updates with the advisory group. Dr. Gallegos reviewed information received from federal officials, including clarification that registered apprenticeship programs may qualify, upskilling programs are allowable, and licensure-based programs may measure completion based on completion of required coursework rather than receipt of a professional license.

Additional federal guidance indicated that students must reside in the state where workforce demand exists for the occupation associated with the program. Participating institutions will be required to certify the accuracy of information submitted through a federal application process. Participants also discussed requirements related to minimum program length, prior operation of eligible programs, and the role of written arrangements with non-eligible providers and apprenticeship sponsors.

The group noted that several implementation questions remain unresolved and that additional federal guidance is expected.

3. Decision Points

The advisory group continued discussion of statewide policy decisions that must be addressed prior to implementation of Workforce Pell in New Mexico.

a. Definitions – Drafts for Discussion

Dr. Brittany Gallegos noted that the U.S. Department of Education has not yet approved any standard definitions and that states are currently developing their own approaches. Scott Groginsky reviewed recommendations previously discussed by the State Workforce Development Board.

Discussion focused on proposed definitions for high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations. Participants discussed whether high-skill occupations should require credentials beyond a high school diploma and how existing state workforce definitions could be incorporated. Rachel Moskowitz reported that NMACC had compiled examples from other states and encouraged the group to consider multiple approaches before adopting final definitions.

Deputy Secretary Marcos Martinez emphasized the need for flexibility in rural areas, particularly when defining in-demand occupations. Participants generally agreed that statewide definitions should support both urban and rural workforce needs while remaining consistent with federal requirements.

b. Verifications

The group discussed verification requirements and the types of information institutions may be required to submit. Discussion included program-level data, evidence of workforce demand, credential information, and documentation needed to demonstrate compliance with federal Workforce Pell requirements.

c. Program Approvals

Mark Chisholm reviewed the anticipated approval process. The advisory group and State Workforce Development Board will provide recommendations to HED and DWS. Following review of those recommendations, HED and DWS will prepare a proposed state plan for consideration by the Governor. Final approval of Workforce Pell programs will ultimately be subject to review and approval by the U.S. Department of Education.

d. Calculation Methodologies

Participants discussed potential methodologies for evaluating program value and return on investment. Topics included the relationship between program cost and post-completion earnings, treatment of non-federal financial aid, and approaches for measuring net value to students.

e. Criteria for Pilot Programs

The advisory group discussed potential criteria for selecting pilot programs. Participants expressed interest in ensuring representation from rural institutions and communities and emphasized the importance of including a diverse mix of programs and institutions in the pilot phase.

4. Web Page Reminder

Mark Chisholm reminded participants that Workforce Pell agendas, draft documents, meeting materials, and related resources are available through the Workforce Pell Advisory Group webpage. Members were encouraged to review posted materials and provide feedback between meetings.