

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
GOVERNOR



STEPHANIE RODRIGUEZ
NMHED SECRETARY

HOWIE MORALES
LT. GOVERNOR

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

SARITA NAIR
NMDWS SECRETARY

Workforce Pell Advisory Group Meeting

April 22, 2026 10:00 am

Microsoft Teams

Agenda

1. Introductions

In Attendance: Mark Chisholm, Dina Advani, Dr. Brittany Gallegos, Heather Romero, Dr. Patricia Trujillo, Dr. Amber Gallup, Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez, Vanessa Hawker-Executive Dir. NMICC, James Johnson, Mitch Hibbard, Michael Weinberg, Joy Forehand-VP of Workforce Success CNM, Mary Ulrich, Bernadette Panteah-Native Workforce Partners(NWP), Carla Kugler, Mindi-Kim Schrum-Sr. Dir.Off. Financial Aid SJC, Coda Omness-VP ENMU-RU, Steve Sauceda, Ana Greif-VP of Workforce SJC, Becky Rowley-SFCC Pres., Scott Groginsky-Deputy Sec. DWS, Daisy Lira, Sarita Nair-DWS and Dr. Barbara Medina- Executive Dir. NMACC.

2. Overview of Pell Grants and Workforce Pell Grants

Secretary Stephanie Rodriguez – did welcome introductions. In July 2025 congress passed HRI which included expansion in federal Pell grants to student in enrolled in short term career focused post-secondary programs in the United States. This policy change is what we call workforce Pell. The federal law stipulates some basic eligibility standards as you all have seen. Most decisions about program approval, design, and oversight are left with the states and approval by each state’s Governor. In our case Governor Michelle Lujan-Grisham. The final federal regulations are not yet released, however there have been preliminary ones. But we are also gathering information from national convenings. My colleagues have been traveling to these convening to pull information. We have also been looking at resource to really understand what implementation will and will not look like here in our state of New Mexico. We are looking to launch a pilot period this coming year. We have brought you all together to support us in developing a framework and recommendations for workforce Pell implementation in our state. New information and strategies as you all know are being released every day. Our partners at the Department of Workforce Solutions and our agency departments of Academic & Policy, Adult Education, Planning & Research, and Financial Aid are monitoring these updates as they come. Updates are being reported to myself, & Secretary Nair of the Dept. of workforce solutions. I want to thank Deputy Sec. Patricia Trujillo for joining me today and of course our partners Deputy Secretary Scott Groginsky and Secretary Nair for being here today and supporting this work.

Secretary Sarita Nair- Thank you everyone for being here today. I feel like we are ahead of other states in our effort in workforce Pell and look forward to working with you all in our continued strides.

3. Overview of Pell Grants and Workforce Pell Grants

Mark Chisholm- I am the director here at HED in Policy and Academic affairs. We have several of our divisions from HED in this meeting who have been working on this. What we are going through today is to discuss and
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define Workforce Pell grants, advisory group roles, future meetings, and Higher Education Institutional roles.

Dr. Brittney Gallegos shared on screen a workforce Pell grant presentation. Definition of Pell Grant is a need based financial aid awarded to undergraduate students who demonstrate financial need. Pell grants do not need to be repaid. Students must be a US citizen apply for the FAFSA and have not yet earned a bachelor's degree. Continuing Eligibility must meet satisfactory academic progress and continued enrollment in higher education institutions. "Workforce Pell Grant or short-term Pell" has minimum instruction hours, Governors approve programs, offered by a Title IV eligible institution, operate for at least 12 months before approval and performance thresholds.

Federal requirements

- 8 to <15 weeks (150-600 clock hours or equivalent credit hour)
- Must meet Pell eligibility requirements (FAFSA, etc)
- Must align with high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations
- Must be stackable and lead directly to employment
- Greater than or equal to 70% completion rate
- Greater than or equal to 70% job placement rate
- Must meet value-added earnings (ROI)

Why Workforce Pell exists

- Increases access to high-return short-term training
- Improves the labor market outcomes
- Expands economic mobility
- Connects students to stackable career pathways

Deputy Sec. Groginsky- We are really excited about this opportunity in both our departments. And it is a great opportunity for our State as these bullets indicate. To bring the two systems together and increase opportunities for students and employees to meet their needs for the workforce.

Dr. Brittany Gallegos- who might workforce Pell best serve

- Economically disadvantaged students pursuing CTE programs of "Goldilocks" length
- Programs with consistently strong employment outcomes
- Established stable offerings
- Adult ed IET programs
- Businesses that need workers with specific skills

Note: Note every program/student will qualify

Dr. Amber Gallup- I think this could be a major help to adult learners in the state. We have a workforce development model that's rapidly expanding, called Integrated Education and Training. In this model adult learners who need to earn their high school equivalency often called the "GED" simultaneously while taking for credit or non-credit programs towards industry recognized credentials. These workforce training programs often have a tuition component and there is a chance workforce Pell could help us reduce barriers caused by the tuition component.

Deputy Sec. Marcus Martinez- in working with business around the state some of the things we see there is specific industry recognized credentials that employers need. A lot of times employees and employers have to pay tuition expenses for employees to attain required credentials. I see this as an exciting opportunity. It is going to give workers and employers the opportunity to get employees stackable credentials that are needed for the businesses.

Deputy Sec. Groginsky- This initiative is going to give or add to efforts to systemically align or coordinate opportunities.

- Workforce and Higher education institutions will be working together to bring needed programs for workforce credentials
- Streamline credentials and approvals

4. Group tasks/decisions to be made:

Mark Chisholm-Context, why we called you all together now we are going to talk about the steps needed to start eligible programs by July 1, 2026.

- Create advisory group in statewide decision making.
- Pilot phase: develop 5 programs we believe meet the credentials.
- This advisory group will have to be ongoing.
- There are no final rules from the Feds.
- So, in the beginning it may be a bit more forgiving than in future.
- Eventually we would like to phase in more programs
- We may have to adapt programs to meet future requirements.

Dr. Brit Gallegos- note July 1st, 2026, is when the program begins, we might not have the necessary data, and everything needed to fully implement the programs come July 1st. So, no need to panic that we need all these elements, it is just the start date.

Mark Chisholm- on going tasks for the advisory group after pilot phase

- Define eligibility
- Submit programs
- Review and approval
- Monitor outcomes, constant data collection (HEI & HED), matching with DWS

Ultimately the advisory group will be reporting to the Governor or whomever she appoints.

There will be some challenges in setting guidelines for data collection and timelines with HEI's.

5. Higher education institutions internal planning

Mark Chisholm- the advisory board will have to keep in mind the HEI's schedules for data collection and data sets. We want to be able to make collaborations as easy as possible and keep data requests in line with other data projects. The current data we collect from the HEI's probably will not be sufficient to provide the information we need to track. DWS I believe does have data tracking systems in place to track the information we need and we may be able to piggyback on that.

Deputy Groginski- we are going to be working on specific data measurement outcome processes, especially on job placement values. We have been engaging our data research dept. on development on these points. These flags are important because this comes to where this group is really going to help us. We are going to have to figure out definitions. Such as high wage and high skill mean. We have some ideas that we can inform you about. What is an industry recognized credential. We must verify information what constitutes something like does this lead to employee hiring, does this education provide competencies that lead to employer hiring. How do we show this improvement or that they lead to stackable education. We will need to have employer input along with State and higher education.

Sec. Rodriguez-Data measurements and calculations that we do have to keep an eye on as far as the implementation and roll out in New Mexico. Any further comments before we open to discussions?

6. Plan future meetings-

Group consensus is biweekly meetings.

Discussions:

HEI's

What's going on at your institution regarding workforce Pell? Any plans being discussed to fit workforce Pell requirements?

Ana Greif with work force development- we are very excited about this opportunity we have been working internally with different areas to pinpoint potential programs using the Federal guidelines. We do a lot of noncredit training. We have identified a few programs. We are looking to expand our programs and look forward to the State guidance.

Secretary Rodriguez- what programs have you identified?

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Ana Greif- I wish I could give you those off the top of my head. Mostly in project management. We have a class called Business Essentials. Our challenges are identifying existing training that fits within the time criteria and that we can make stackable. But we need to figure out what the industry recognized credential is going to entail.

Coma Onness- ENMU RU we have some allied health certs ex. (Phlebotomy, & CNA). That are not Pell eligible due to credit hours. Our hope is that these will be eligible for workforce Pell. Our partners at Tricare and Presbyterian Health nearly hire all our graduates from these programs. If we can make these programs stackable with our nursing programs, I know our industry partners would be willing to aid us in development and placement.

Steve -NMJC -we have been having conversations however our challenge is the criteria 150-600 clock hours most our programs don't have the hour requirements. There are very few that will qualify under the current requirements. We want to participate and offer this opportunity but awaiting more guidance. But as of now the hours requirement is our biggest challenge along with the stackable requirement ex. (CDL).

Secretary Rodriguez Stephanie- we agree it is overwhelming we will be putting together a website for guidance and resources to help aid our partners with understanding the requirements and guidelines.

Mary Ulrich- Dona Ana- we've met in-house and with some of our other branch institutions and have identified some programs that will fit the current requirements (ex. Early Childhood C.N.A, EMT basic, and Pharmacy Tech.) but time constraints are also our barrier. If we can show shorter programs have great potential to increase workforce development would be great.

Joy-CNM- Our conversations have really centered around looking at workforce Pell in portfolio of funding opportunities. So really looking at diversifying and aligning all the funding these opportunities under Pell and workforce Pell as they are evolving. Designing programs under the current student eligibility to address some of the gaps.

In chat Bernadette Panteah-workforce Pell is an important opportunity to expand equitable access to education and employment for Tribal communities. Allowing Pell grants to support short-term high-quality workforce programs would better server native students who often balance work, family, and cultural responsibilities and cannot commit to traditional degree pathways. These programs align well with the realities of rural and reservation communities, where access to higher education is limited and workforce needs are immediate.

Employer Partners

Have you heard of Workforce Pell?

Have there been any discussions regarding its implementation?

Do any programs come to mind that may be eligible?

Mitch Hibbard-COO Penasco Valley Telephone Coop - there has been a huge infostructure build in fiber in our state. A lot of these programs we have used in coordination with SFCC. They run about a week or two long. There is a huge need in our state right now with fiber and wireless technology. I wonder how these play into this opportunity. I have not heard of this program till now. It sounds like a great opportunity for our State, and the stackable feature seems beneficial to employers.

In Chat- workforce Industries mentioned cybersecurity, aerospace, natural resources, construction, broadband, early childhood, and health.

Carl Kuglar- President of Associated Builders and Contractors – Apprenticeship has been the gold standard construction training, but it is also the slowest way to grow a trades person. I am still learning about the workforce Pell grant and how it may help our industry. It is exciting to think this could get individuals' industry recognized training right out the door and into the workforce. For our industry this is very

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compelling. Not to mention the stackable feature which could possibly lead to further advancement opportunities in the industry. We are excited to learn more and work with our community college partners in development.

Daisy Lira- it's very important since universal childcare is here to stay. This could help our industry grow to meet demand. I currently run 4 childcare centers in southern NM and there is a need for trained child care workers and I would love to see this opportunity help us to meet this need.

Micheal Weinberg- Presbyterian Government Affairs- will there be opportunities for existing employees to advance in their industry in stackable options? I would like to address this question at our next meeting.