

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

May 6, 2026

### Attendance

Dina Advani, Mark Chisholm, Dr. Amber Gallup, Johanna Sandoval, Dr. Becky Rowley, Chris Bullard, Daisy Lira, Joy Forehand, James Johnston, Kathy Steen, Kelly Roepke-Orth, Marcos Martinez, Dr. Mary Ulrich, Joan Baker, Rachel Moskowitz, NMACC representatives, Coda Omness, Steve Saucedo, Dr. Vanessa Hawker, and Michael Weinberg.

### 1. Updates

Mark Chisholm reported that the Workforce Pell Advisory Group webpage is now active on the Higher Education Department website. Staff from HED and DWS are attending the National Governors Association Workforce Pell meeting in Washington, D.C., and information learned from that meeting will be shared with the advisory group at a future meeting. Chisholm also reported that consultation with the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) began on May 5 and will continue as implementation planning progresses.

Dr. Amber Gallup reported on discussion at the SWDB meeting. Gallup noted that existing CTE definitions may be useful in developing statewide Workforce Pell definitions and emphasized the importance of alignment between Workforce Pell and Career Technical Education programs. Additional discussion focused on rural representation, potential pilot participation by ENMU-Ruidoso, the role of apprenticeships and third-party training providers, and definitions of high-demand and high-wage occupations.

### 2. Workforce Pell Decision-Making Sequence

Mark Chisholm reviewed the anticipated Workforce Pell approval process. The advisory group and SWDB will provide recommendations and input to HED and DWS. Following review of that input, HED and DWS will develop a draft state plan and recommendations for consideration by the Governor. The final state plan will then be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education for review and approval.

Kelly Roepke-Orth asked how stakeholders should submit recommendations and whether definitions of high-wage occupations should include benefits in addition to wages. Chisholm encouraged participants to provide comments to HED and DWS staff and noted that the state intends to build upon existing workforce and education definitions whenever possible rather than creating entirely new definitions.

### **3. Projected Timeline**

Mark Chisholm reviewed the projected implementation timeline. HED and DWS plan to issue invitations to institutions interested in participating in the pilot program following discussions with institutions and completion of meetings related to Workforce Pell implementation. Draft definitions are expected to be developed during May and presented to the advisory group for review. The group discussed looking at other states, including Iowa, for examples of Workforce Pell implementation.

The anticipated timeline includes development of an application process in June, pilot application materials by July 1, and continued refinement of statewide guidance as federal information becomes available.

### **4. Statewide Decisions Needed**

The advisory group discussed several statewide policy decisions that must be addressed prior to implementation. Topics included establishment of a statewide application and approval cycle, definitions for program length and integrated education and training (IET) components, definitions of high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations, and criteria related to stackable, portable, and terminal credentials.

Participants emphasized the importance of adopting consistent statewide definitions that align with existing workforce and education systems while remaining consistent with federal requirements.

### **5. Verification Processes / Oversight**

Discussion focused on verification processes needed to ensure that Workforce Pell programs meet federal and state requirements. Topics included verification of stackability, portability, employer alignment, and competency-based outcomes. Participants noted the importance of establishing transparent review procedures and documentation requirements.

### **6. Data Methodological Processes**

The group discussed data and accountability measures that will be necessary to support Workforce Pell implementation. Topics included definitions of completion rates, job placement rates, and value-added earnings calculations. Participants recognized the need for consistent methodologies that can be applied statewide and supported through existing data systems.

### **7. Data Shifts**

Discussion focused on data system changes that may be required to support Workforce Pell reporting. Topics included identification and flagging of Workforce Pell programs, cross-agency data alignment, establishment of cohort definitions, matching enrollment and completion data, and validation of DEAR and federal reporting submissions. Participants agreed that data consistency and coordination between agencies will be critical to successful implementation.