

WORKFORCE PELL ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

April 22, 2026

Hosted by:
New Mexico Higher Education Department
New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions



NEW MEXICO
HIGHER EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT

Fostering Student Success from Cradle to Career



AGENDA

01

Introductions

02

**Overview of Pell Grants and
Workforce Pell Grants**

03

Group Tasks/Decisions to be Made

04

**Higher Education Institutions Internal
Planning**

05

Plan Future Meetings

A photograph of two young adults, a Black woman and a white man, sitting on wooden bleachers and talking. The woman is on the left, wearing a dark jacket and olive pants, holding a laptop. The man is on the right, wearing a light blue shirt and dark pants, holding a book. In the background, another student is visible sitting on the bleachers. A semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the title text.

PELL AND WORKFORCE PELL OVERVIEW

WHAT IS A PELL GRANT?

A need-based financial aid awarded to undergraduate students who demonstrate financial need. Unlike loans, a Pell Grant does not have to be repaid (except in rare cases, like withdrawing early from school).

Qualified Student:

- Must apply through the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
- U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen
- For students who haven't yet earned a bachelor's degree

How much is awarded:

- The maximum award changes yearly with federal funding
- For current academic years, it is between \$7,000-\$7,500 per year based on the students Student Aid Index (SAI), cost of attendance, full-time vs part-time enrollment, and program length
- Students can receive Pell Grants for up to 12 semesters

Continuing Eligibility:

- Must meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)
- Continued enrollment

WHAT IS WORKFORCE PELL?

In July 2025, Congress passed H.R. 1, which included an expansion of federal Pell Grants to students enrolled in short-term, career-focused postsecondary programs. This policy change is commonly referred to as “Workforce Pell” or Short-Term Pell.” While the law stipulates some basic eligibility standards, most decisions about program approval, design, and oversight are left to the states. Program eligibility and approval are determined by states and the federal government in the following ways:

Federal law requires programs to meet minimum instructional hours, operate for at least 12 months before approval, and be offered by a Title IV eligible institution.

Governors approve programs that prepare students for high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations, align with employer needs, lead to stackable and portable, or academic credit-bearing credentials.

The U.S. Department of Education verifies eligibility based on completion and job placement rates and a value-added earnings test comparing program costs to graduate earnings.

KEY FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

PROGRAM LENGTH

- 8 to <15 weeks
- 150-600 clock hours (or equivalent credit hours)

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

- Must meet Pell eligibility requirements (FAFSA, etc.)

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

- Must align with high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations
- Must be stackable and lead directly to employment

PERFORMANCE THRESHOLDS

- $\geq 70\%$ completion rate,
- $\geq 70\%$ job placement rate, and
- Must meet Value-Added Earnings (ROI) requirement

WHY WORKFORCE PELL EXISTS AND WHY IT MATTERS TO NEW MEXICO



**INCREASE ACCESS TO HIGH-RETURN
SHORT-TERM TRAINING**



IMPROVE LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES



EXPAND ECONOMIC MOBILITY



**CONNECT STUDENTS TO STACKABLE
CAREER PATHWAYS**

- Expands Pell to short-term workforce programs
- Elevates noncredit into the federal aid ecosystem
- Strengthens measurable alignment between education and workforce systems
- Supports state effort to streamline industry-recognized credentials across K-12, higher ed, and workforce
- Positions NM as a national implementation leader
- Bolsters NM's workforce, especially in priority industries and occupations
- Impacts businesses
- *More support for more students*

WHO MIGHT WORKFORCE PELL BEST SERVE?



ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS PURSUING CTE PROGRAMS LEADING TO CERTAIN CREDENTIALS, OF “GOLDBLOCKS” LENGTH

PROGRAMS WITH CONSISTENTLY STRONG EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

ESTABLISHED, STABLE OFFERINGS

POTENTIAL SKILLS TRAINING PORTION OF ADULT EDUCATION IET PROGRAMS

BUSINESSES THAT NEED WORKERS WITH SPECIFIC SKILLS

NOT EVERY PROGRAM. NOT EVERY STUDENT. STRATEGIC DEPLOYMENT MATTERS.

SYSTEMIC ALIGNMENT & COORDINATION OPPORTUNITIES



Employers inform job value and recognized academic credentials, competencies

Higher education programs focus on in-demand industries, high-wage, high-skill jobs

Supports state effort to streamline industry recognized credentials across K-12, higher education, and workforce

HED and DWS partner on Workforce Pell decisions, plan development, and approval processes

Higher education and workforce leaders inform each other on key issues

NOW

Planning Phase:
Convening
Advisory Group

STARTING JULY 1, 2026

Pilot Phase
Begins with ~5
Eligible
Programs,
Following
Necessary
Approvals

ONGOING

Engage
Advisory Group
in Statewide
Decision-
Making,
Meeting
Regularly

FUTURE

Phase in More
Programs;
Programs May
Have to Adapt
to Meet
Requirements

PLANNED TIMING

PROCESS: BEYOND PILOT PHASE

DEFINE ELIGIBILITY


SUBMIT PROGRAMS

REVIEW AND APPROVE

MONITOR OUTCOMES, CONSTANT DATA
COLLECTION



Credit: Photo by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

A group of students in a laboratory setting are working on a large, white, circular HVAC unit. One student in the foreground is wearing a brown beanie, safety glasses, and a dark long-sleeved shirt, and is using a blue and red tool to work on the unit. Several other students are standing in the background, observing the work. The lab is filled with various pieces of equipment and overhead fluorescent lights.

GROUP TASKS & DECISIONS

KEY STATE DECISION POINTS ON WORKFORCE PELL



Scope and extent of initial rollout

Definitions related to eligibility

Verification and oversight processes

Plan for data measurements and calculations

- Completion rates
- Job placement rates
- Value-added earnings

Decision-making processes for program approvals

25% non-accredited eligible institutions

HEI INSTITUTIONAL INTERNAL PLANNING

TO OUR HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERS:

- What conversations have been happening at your higher education institutions regarding Workforce Pell?
- Are any plans being discussed (i.e., shifting program structure to fit Workforce Pell requirements?)

EMPLOYER PARTNER PLANNING

TO OUR 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?



PLANNING FUTURE MEETINGS

NEW MEXICO RESOURCES: WORKFORCE PELL

