



AACC Policy Update: Latest Developments in Workforce Pell July 29, 2026

Kate Kinder, Executive Director, National Council for Workforce Education
Chandler LeBoeuf, Executive Vice President, Louisiana Community and Technical
College System

Iris Palmer, Director, Community Colleges, New America

Steven Partridge, Vice President, Strategy, Research and Workforce Innovation,
Northern Virginia Community College

Jim Hermes, Associate Vice President, Government Relations, AACC (moderator)





AGENDA

- **Status Update**
- **National Perspectives**
- **State Perspective**
- **Institutional Perspective**





WP Status

- **Program went “live” on July 1**
- **Several programs have received state approval**
 - **Variation among states regarding approval processes**
- **Some programs have been submitted to ED**
- **No programs yet approved by ED**
 - **Initial applications will likely take a couple of months to be approved**
 - **Guidance from ED hopefully forthcoming**





WP Issues

- **Challenges:**
 - **Access to data**
 - **12-month rule**
 - **Program length requirements**
 - **State engagement**
 - **Additional state requirements**
- **Program is in early days! Everybody trying to get this right!**





Panelists

- **Iris Palmer**
 - Director, Community Colleges, New America
- **Kate Kinder**
 - Executive Director, National Council for Workforce Education
- **Chandler LeBoeuf**
 - Executive Vice President, Louisiana Community and Technical College System
- **Steven Partridge**
 - Vice President, Strategy, Research and Workforce Innovation, Northern Virginia Community College



Workforce Pell Implementation

Iris Palmer, *New America*

Requirements for Eligible Postsecondary Credential Programs

- Requirements determined by a State, after consultation with a State board



Alignment

Program must be aligned with “high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sector or occupations”



Meets Hiring Requirements

Program must meet the hiring requirements of employers in the sectors with which it's aligned



Portability

Program must either be “stackable and portable” across more than one employer or lead to the only recognized postsecondary credential for an occupation



Academic Credit

Students who complete the program must receive academic credit toward a certificate or degree program

- Requirements determined by the Department



Length (Calendar Time)

8 to 14 weeks



Length (Hours)

Between 150 – 599 clock hours (or an equivalent number of credit hours)



Modality

Cannot be offered using correspondence courses



Time Offered

Must meet program criteria at least 12 months preceding date school applied for eligibility



Completion Rates

Must have verified completion rate of at least 70% within 150% of normal time



Placement Rates

Must have verified job placement rate of 70% measured 180 days after completion



Value Added Earnings Measure

Must cost less than the median earnings above 150 percent of the poverty line, regionally adjusted

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This Analysis Covers 14 States

Final Policies — 11 States

Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan,
Minnesota, North Carolina, Louisiana,
Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas

Draft Policies — 3 States

Arizona, Maryland, and Illinois

Four Requirements Unlock Program Approval

1. Occupation

Program must lead to a job on the state's approved occupation list.

2. Employer Demand

Evidence shows employers actually want these workers.

3. Portable & Stackable

Credential must transfer across employers and lead to another program.

4. Articulation

Completed coursework must count for credit at related college credential.

One Occupation, Three Tests

Most states require just one of the three. Colorado, Texas, Illinois, and Minnesota require all three.

01 High-Skill

Needs training beyond high school.

02 High-Wage

Pays enough to justify the investment, usually measured against a wage floor.

03 In-Demand

Employers are actively hiring, based on projected job openings.

How Strict Is “In-Demand”?

State	Threshold	Where It Falls
Michigan	Any occupation with more openings than the statewide median	Most permissive
Colorado	At least 40 annual openings, growing faster than the state average	Middle of the pack
Louisiana	MJ Foster Priority Industry AND rated 4–5 stars on the Star Jobs framework	More selective
Tennessee	Wage floor, size floor, plus 2 of 3 hiring-activity indicators	Most selective

Wage and Skill Bars Vary Just as Much

High-Wage Threshold

- PA sets the floor lowest, at 150% of the federal poverty level.
- IL sits in the middle with 85% of the MIT Living Wage for one adult and one child.
- TN sets it highest, requiring a 20% premium over the regional median wage.

High-Skill Requirement

- TN and PA accept a high school diploma plus on-the-job training.
- MD and CO require a mid-level O*NET Job Zone rating instead.

Employer Demand

Most states: two to three letters from employers/industry groups confirming demand for graduates.

Colorado: also accepts a credential already on its statewide qualified-credentials list, or advisory-committee minutes showing several employers at the table.

Arizona, Ohio and Iowa: go further, accepting job postings or workforce-board minutes in place of formal letters.

Two Related Questions, Overlapping Evidence

Is it Portable?

Most states reuse the same multi-employer letters that established hiring demand. Texas, Arizona, Colorado, Louisiana and Michigan explicitly let one letter serve both purposes.

Is it Stackable?

States look for articulation deals, transfer agreements, or consortium partnerships — or, lacking those, pathway maps and wage-progression data.

Documenting Articulation

Most states: a written articulation agreement or a credit-for-prior-learning crosswalk spelling out which credits transfer.

Colorado & Louisiana: go furthest, requiring public disclosure of how each credit applies; required courses, electives, or general credit.

Ohio & Illinois: built a shortcut; credentials included in statewide transfer pathways automatically clear the articulation bar.

The ETPL Wrinkle

Six states — Colorado, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, and North Carolina — also require listing on the federal WIOA training-provider registry, or ETPL.

Arizona & Illinois allow approved programs to opt into the ETPL.

DOL wage-data system (SWIS) several states plan to use for job-placement outcomes currently requires programs be listed on ETPL

What to Watch Next

Common Ground

States are converging on similar evidence: employer letters & articulation agreements.

Real Differences Remain

How strict those standards are varies enormously by state.

Expect Refinement

As colleges start submitting programs, standards will need adjusting for Workforce Pell to reach its potential.



NCWE

**NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR
WORKFORCE EDUCATION**

Kate Kinder, kkinder@ncwe.org

www.ncwe.org

50+ DIFFERENT PROCESSES BUT CONSISTENCY AMONG COLLEGES THAT:

- ➡ THE SLOW START IS STRATEGIC AND INTENTIONAL, AND WE NEED TO BE CLEAR ABOUT WHY
- ➡ IT'S CRITICAL THAT WE AMPLIFY WHAT IS POSSIBLE AND WHAT IS NOT WITHIN CURRENT WORKFORCE PELL RULES

A close-up, low-angle shot of industrial pipelines. The pipes are metallic and feature several flanges with bolts. In the background, a series of bright, glowing orange lights create a bokeh effect, suggesting a high-temperature industrial environment like a refinery or power plant.

Process and Program Pipelines

Opportunity Imperative: Braiding resources for modern learners; WFP as an additional lever and resource



@NCWE 2026

Campus Implementation

01

Eliminating traditional academic silos and ensuring the status quo does not drive the process or stifle workforce innovation and excellence

02

Relying on expertise of workforce staff / faculty who have been coaching students, braiding funding, and partnering with employers

03

Centering student experience = outreach, enrollment, holistic support, academic advising and financial aid processes need to shift

04

Adapting infrastructures = student record systems, academic terms, data, financial aid and registration processes

05

Being clear about the challenges of policy parameters and the opportunity to meet the needs of modern learners, employers, and our economy.



Workforce Pell as a Catalyst to Transform Higher Ed and Workforce Ecosystems



LOUISIANA COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGES

Built for This Moment

Workforce Pell in Louisiana: From National Advocacy to Day-One Launch

Dr. Chandler LeBoeuf

Executive Vice President, LCTCS

12 colleges • Every parish in Louisiana • AACC Workforce Pell Webinar • July 2026

Why This Matters in Louisiana

Workforce Pell arrived in a state that was already moving on workforce education



Most

Louisiana jobs do not require a four-year degree



\$286M vs \$25M

State aid to four-year (TOPS) vs. community & technical college students



+\$23M

New state investment in LCTCS this year alone

Workforce training has been a signature priority for Gov. Jeff Landry since 2024 — Workforce Pell extends that momentum with federal dollars.

How Louisiana Stood It Up

A tri-agency launch, live on day one — July 1, 2026



Only ~12 states had published their in-demand program frameworks at launch. Louisiana was live — portal open, programs approved, partners aligned.

What Students Get

Fast, focused training for the careers driving Louisiana's economy



8 to <15 weeks

150–599 clock hours of instruction



~\$2,200 typical grant

Up to \$4,300 by program length — aid that never has to be repaid



Same Pell rules

Eligibility through the FAFSA, aimed at students with exceptional financial need



Approved fields track Louisiana's growth sectors

Skilled trades first: carpentry, construction, plumbing, HVAC, transportation, manufacturing

Plus the new economy: training tied to AI and energy infrastructure — major drivers of Louisiana job growth — and select healthcare

Full eligible program list: laworks.net → Workforce Pell
[Workforce Pell Introduction - Louisiana Works](#)

The Stacking Strategy

Federal dollars that stretch every state aid dollar further

MJ FOSTER PROMISE

Louisiana's primary aid for adult learners — demand exceeds dollars

TOPS TECH

State merit aid for technical education pathways

WORKFORCE PELL

New federal layer — closes the affordability gap and frees state aid to reach more students

“

For a student whose next class could triple their wage, needing \$2,000 up front is the whole barrier. Workforce Pell could that gap.

— the affordability case, in one sentence

Stacking Workforce Pell with MJ Foster Promise and TOPS Tech lets Louisiana serve more students with the same state investment.

Honest About the Hard Parts

The accountability bar is high — and it's reshaping our data infrastructure

70%

Completion required

A high bar for adult learners balancing jobs and families

70%

Job placement in 180 days

Colleges must verify employment after completion

ROI

Positive earnings test

Completer earnings must clear tuition + 150% of poverty level



Our answer: build the data muscle now

Louisiana doesn't yet fully track these metrics — so LCTC, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, and LED are building integrated wage-and-outcome analytics to keep programs eligible past year one. Grants also may not cover full program cost, which is exactly why stacking matters.



Early Days. Long Game.

1

We helped build it

A decade of Louisiana leadership in the national case for Workforce Pell

2

We launched July 2026

Tri-agency approval, one statewide portal, partners aligned July 1

3

We're building to last

Data infrastructure and stacked aid designed for year two and beyond

Federal aid is reaching the students — and the jobs — that drive Louisiana's economy.

Workforce Pell @ NOVA

- **Virginia's Implementation timeline**
- **Systemwide approach**
- **LMI Data will drive program selection**
- **Fast Forward (FF) will drive enrollment**

Workforce Pell @ NOVA

- **95% completion rate for FF classes**
- **65% wage gain across all FF programs**
- **CPL already mapped for FF classes**
- **Skilled Trades will be our WP focus**



September 15-16, 2026
Washington, DC.

The American Association of Community Colleges' Advocates in Action is a 2-day program designed for community college leaders who want an insider's view on how Washington formulates higher education policy and who want to become more involved in the federal legislative process. Interactive sessions with key executive branch officials and senior Congressional staff will provide valuable insights about the current dynamics and issues surrounding key funding and other pending legislation. Time is reserved for attendees to meet with their federal legislators to advocate for community college priorities.



<https://s1.goeshow.com/aacc/AiA2026/>



QUESTIONS?

