



# Workforce Pell Grant Workgroup

## Meeting Minutes

April 2, 2026; 10:00am – 11:30 am EDT

IN-PERSON – 500 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY: 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
Or Via Zoom

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**Attendees:** Sam Keathley, David Potter, Miles Feroli, Rajeev Darolia, Brittany Cox, Alicia Crouch, Beth Hargis, Rob Collins, Sarah Ehresman, Myra Wilson, Mike Yoder, Jessie Schook, Karen Dodd, Matt Berry, Mason Dyer, Beck Gilpatrick

**KWIB Staff:** Alisher Burikhanov, Debbie Dennison, LaChrista Ellis, Elishah Taylor, and Sara Jagers

### **10:00 am Welcome**

**Alisher Burikhanov, Executive Director, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB)**, opened the meeting with remarks acknowledging participants' continued engagement and commitment to advancing the Workforce Pell initiative. It was noted that recent state legislation has seen movement, reinforcing the requirement to complete this work and adding urgency to the group's efforts. Participants were encouraged to focus on producing a strong, complete framework in the short term, with the understanding that refinements can occur after initial implementation.

Additional discussion addressed the federal public comment process. Due to procedural constraints within state agencies, it may be more efficient for individual organizations to submit comments independently rather than as a unified group. Participants were encouraged to share feedback through their respective channels to help inform federal rulemaking.

### **Definitions: High-Skill, High-Wage, & In-Demand**

**David Potter, Ph.D., Senior Coordinator, Education Transition Strategist, Kentucky Adult Education**, reviewed proposed definitions for high-wage and in-demand occupations, building on progress from the previous meeting. The high-wage definition was discussed in detail, with the proposed approach of using a median wage as a qualifier at the statewide level or within each local workforce area.

Discussion highlighted the importance of comparing wages within geographic contexts to better account for regional economic differences. Discussions included ensuring that occupations considered high wage in rural areas are not excluded due to lower statewide averages. At the same time, participants noted a potential tradeoff: occupations could qualify statewide based on meeting the threshold in only one local area, which may introduce some variability in standards.

Despite this concern, the group generally agreed that median wage exclusive of geography supports a more learner-centered approach, allowing individuals to train for opportunities that may exist outside their immediate region. It also aligns with how programs are approved at the system level, ensuring consistency across institutions. No formal objections were raised, and the group expressed general support for moving

forward with the proposed high-wage definition. The group also briefly reviewed the in-demand definition and supporting data, with further discussion anticipated as definitions continue to be refined.

### **Definition Discussion: High Skill**

**Dr. Potter** introduced the discussion on the high-skill definition, noting that this area may require additional consideration to reach consensus. Data presented included typical education requirements based on national standards; however, it was acknowledged that these classifications may not fully reflect Kentucky's workforce training landscape.

Participants emphasized the importance of ensuring that the definition aligns with Workforce Pell eligibility requirements and accurately captures relevant training pathways beyond traditional degree programs. Further refinement and discussion is needed to establish a definition that balances clarity, flexibility, and alignment with workforce needs.

### **State Higher Education Organization (SHEO) Perspective**

**Miles Feroli, Ph.D., Senior Associate**, shared updates from a recent convening hosted by the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), highlighting federal priorities related to workforce and economic development. Members were invited to provide input on key questions, with agreement to coordinate and potentially submit a unified state response while allowing for differing perspectives.

The following topics were identified by SHEEO for input:

#### **1. WFP Instruction Limits**

Consider whether WFP rules should allow up to 50% of instruction to be delivered by outside providers (currently capped at 25%). There is openness to increase this limit if warranted.

#### **2. Use of Non-Federal Aid**

Explore strategies to ensure institutions do not circumvent federal intent regarding aid sequencing. Specifically, how can programs ensure that existing state and institutional resources are applied first to support short-term credentials before non-federal aid is used?

#### **3. Distance-Based Program Agreements**

Governors are entering bilateral agreements to limit the growth of distance-based programs. While there is federal concern about restricting access, student mobility is acknowledged. Input is requested on how to manage this issue effectively.

#### **4. Outcome Evaluation Exclusions**

Determine whether additional categories should be excluded from outcome evaluations. Current exclusions include individuals who are incarcerated, unable to work due to illness, or serving in active military duty.

The group supported maintaining the current 25% limit on external instruction to ensure quality and discussed concerns about conflicts between state and federal funding requirements, emphasizing the need for clearer federal guidance. Additional discussion addressed challenges with distance education, interstate participation, and fraud risks in online programs. Participants also supported excluding certain populations from outcome metrics including those continuing education or facing extenuating circumstances. Next steps include aligning feedback by sending responses to Dr. Feroli, and preparing a consolidated submission ahead of upcoming deadlines.

### **Definition Discussion: Stackable & Portable Credentials**

The group identified stackable and portable credentials as a key topic for continued discussion. Emphasis was placed on ensuring that credentials can build upon one another over time and be recognized across institutions and regions. These characteristics are essential to supporting learner mobility and long-term career advancement. Additional discussion will be needed to provide definitions and determine how they will be incorporated into program eligibility criteria.

**11:30 am – Closing Comments and Adjournment**

The meeting concluded with acknowledgment of the progress made, particularly regarding the high-wage definition, and a shared commitment to continue refining remaining definitions. Participants discussed the potential need to increase meeting frequency to maintain momentum and meet established timelines. Supporting materials and data will be distributed for further review, and the group will continue working toward consensus on remaining items. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, April 23, 2026.