



Workforce Pell Grant Workgroup

Meeting Minutes

May 13, 2026; 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. ET

**IN-PERSON – 500 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY: 4th Floor Conference Room
Or Via Zoom**

Attendees: David Potter, Matt Berry, Jessie Schook, LeeSa Page, Alicia Crouch, Cassie Trueblood Fields, Jessica Fletcher, Becky Gilpatrick, Wesley Whistle, Rajeev Darolia, Myra Wilson, Sarah Ehresman, Leslie Sizemore, Beth Hargis, Rob Collins, Trey Pippin, Sarah Hail

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

11:00 a.m. Welcome

Alisher Burikhanov, Executive Director, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB), welcomed attendees and thanked members for their continued participation in the Workforce Pell process. He emphasized that the workgroup is finalizing components and ensuring alignment across partners.

Alisher also acknowledged the collaboration between state agencies, higher education, workforce partners, and national advisors throughout the process. David Potter echoed appreciation for the partnership and encouraged the group to continue working toward completion of the framework and policy recommendations.

Workforce Pell National Update

Rajeev Darolia, Ph.D., Wendell H. Ford Professor of Public Policy & Economics, University Research Professor, University of Kentucky, provided an update on the anticipated regulations and shared timelines are now anticipated for release in mid-May following changes in the federal regulatory timeline. He noted that the regulations are currently under review by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and are expected to remain largely consistent with the previously released draft rule.

Discussion included several areas still under federal consideration, including bilateral state data-sharing agreements, treatment of enrolled students within program performance calculations, and ongoing challenges associated with stackable pathways and embedded credentials.

Dr. Darolia also reported that several states, including Maryland and Minnesota, have released draft Workforce Pell policies for public comment, while other states remain in earlier stages of development. Participants noted that Kentucky continues to be viewed nationally as being ahead of many states in planning and implementation efforts.

NGA Workforce Implementation Lab Debrief

Alisher Burikhanov provided a summary of the National Governors Association (NGA) Workforce Pell Implementation Lab which he attended alongside representatives from Kentucky Community & Technical College System (KCTCS) and Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS).

Discussion focused on national implementation challenges, including:

- Compressed timelines between federal rule release and implementation.

- State capacity for longitudinal data systems and labor market information.
- Cross-agency collaboration between workforce, higher education, and economic development partners.
- Integration of Workforce Pell with Perkins, WIOA, and other federal workforce initiatives.

Kentucky's strengths include data infrastructure and interagency collaboration. Additional conversation focused on:

- Registered apprenticeship alignment under Workforce Pell.
- Challenges associated with fitting apprenticeship-related instruction into short-term program requirements.
- The importance of non-credit to credit articulation and stackable credential pathways.

KCTCS representatives discussed operational considerations related to program development, employer validation, institutional infrastructure, and student enrollment practices. Concerns were also raised regarding embedded certificates within longer academic pathways and how completion and placement rates should be calculated for Workforce Pell eligibility.

The group discussed possible approaches states may use to address early implementation challenges, including temporary flexibility around completion and job placement calculations during initial years of implementation. Participants also reflected on the importance of employer engagement and emerging labor market needs in future program development, particularly for rapidly evolving industries and technologies.

Finalizing Definitions: In-Demand, High-Wage, OR High-Skill

Dr. David Potter reviewed the draft plain-language and operationalized definitions previously shared with the workgroup for in-demand, high-wage, and high-skill occupations.

Discussion included review of the occupational list developed using the proposed criteria and the methodology used to identify occupations meeting Workforce Pell eligibility standards. Participants expressed support for the definitions and acknowledged the importance of balancing transparency, simplicity, and flexibility.

Additional discussion focused on the need to further refine how "emerging" occupations are identified, opportunities to incorporate economic development and employer intelligence into future workforce forecasting, the limitations of traditional labor market data in identifying future skills and occupations, and the relationship between Workforce Pell definitions and broader state workforce and education strategies.

Participants discussed future opportunities to strengthen qualitative data collection and employer feedback loops to better identify emerging occupations and workforce trends.

The workgroup expressed general consensus with the current draft definitions while acknowledging additional refinement may occur over time.

Stackable and Portable Credentials

The group also reviewed draft approaches for defining stackable and portable credentials. Discussion emphasized the importance of ensuring that Workforce Pell-eligible programs support progression within career pathways, allow transferability across institutions and employers, and include evidence of articulation, transferability, or employer recognition.

Participants discussed using an attestation model during initial implementation, where institutions would provide documentation demonstrating where credentials have the ability to be stacked and are portable through instances such as articulation agreements, transfer agreements, or partnership documentation.

The group also discussed the potential for future review and validation processes to ensure consistency and accountability.

Workforce Pell Draft Policy Introduction

Workgroup members introduced discussion on broader Workforce Pell draft policy components, including federal eligibility requirements, governance structure and state-level definitions, employer validation, academic credit transfer, appeals processes, eligible occupation lists, and registered apprenticeship considerations.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on the scope of eligible occupations and whether Workforce Pell programs should be tied only to occupations directly accessible upon completion of the short-term credential.

Participants compared Kentucky's broad occupational list with narrower occupation lists being considered by other states. Discussion included concerns about ensuring students clearly understand employment outcomes associated with Workforce Pell-supported programs.

Additional discussion focused on alignment between credentials and occupational entry requirements, embedded credentials within longer academic pathways, employer-informed validation of program outcomes, and balancing flexibility with accountability in implementation.

Workgroup members agreed that additional policy refinement and legal review will be necessary as final federal regulations are released.

12:54 p.m. – Closing Comments and Adjournment

Alisher and David thanked the group for their continued collaboration and commitment to finalizing Kentucky's Workforce Pell framework. Participants were informed that additional draft policy materials and legal guidance will be shared once available.



KWIB Workforce Pell Workgroup Meeting

AGENDA
May 13, 2026
11:00 am – 1:00 pm ET

Education and Labor Cabinet
4th Floor Main Conference Room
500 Mero Street
Frankfort, KY 40601

- 11:00 am** **Welcome** *Alisher Burikhanov*
Executive Director
Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB)

David Potter, Ph.D.
Senior Coordinator, Education Transition Strategist
Kentucky Adult Education

- 11:05 am** **Workforce Pell National Update**..... *Rajeev Darolia, Ph.D.*
Wendell H. Ford Professor of Public Policy & Economics
University of Kentucky

- 11:15 am** **NGA Workforce Implementation Lab Debrief**..... *Alisher Burikhanov*

- 11:25 am** **Finalizing Definitions**..... *David Potter, Ph.D.*

 - *In-Demand, High-Wage, OR High-Skill*
 - *Stackable and Portable*

- 11:45 am** **Workforce Pell Draft Policy Introduction**..... *Workgroup Members*

 - *Eligibility Requirements (federal)*
 - *Governance & Definitions (state)*
 - *Employer Validation*
 - *Academic Credit Transfer*
 - *Appeals Process*
 - *List of Occupations*
 - *Registered Apprenticeship*

- 1:00 pm** **Adjournment**..... *Alisher Burikhanov*