

Submitted by the Arkansas Division of Higher Education on behalf of the Governor's Office to the Arkansas Workforce Development Board and approved on 5.21.26.

Executive Summary

State of Arkansas Workforce Pell Implementation Plan

The State of Arkansas has established a comprehensive, data-driven, and employer-validated framework to implement Workforce Pell in alignment with federal requirements under 34 CFR §§690.93–690.95. This plan ensures that all approved programs deliver high-quality, workforce-aligned training that leads to strong employment outcomes and economic mobility for students.

State Leadership and Governance

The Governor, in consultation with the Arkansas State Workforce Development Board, serves as the approving authority for all eligible workforce programs. The Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) and the Arkansas Department of Commerce (ACOM) collaboratively support program review, data validation, and ongoing accountability, with employment and wage outcome verification through ARData at the Arkansas Department of Shared Administrative Services.

Workforce-Aligned Program Approval

Arkansas uses its established 5-Star Occupational Demand methodology—which evaluates demand, growth, retention, and earnings—to ensure programs align with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations. Programs must demonstrate alignment through CIP-to-SOC mapping and meet clearly defined thresholds for workforce relevance.

Employer-Driven Validation

Programs must provide direct evidence of employer demand, including:

- Employer commitments to hire, interview, or prioritize completers
- Demonstrated job placement outcomes, or
- Ongoing employer engagement in program design and delivery

This ensures that all approved programs are responsive to real labor market needs.

Credential Quality and Career Pathways

All programs must lead to a recognized, stackable, and portable credential, including industry certifications, licensure, or Registered Apprenticeships. Programs must also demonstrate clear

pathways to additional credentials or degrees, supported by articulation agreements or prior learning credit policies.

Data-Driven Accountability

Arkansas leverages its statewide longitudinal data system (ARData) and the Arkansas Higher Education Information System (AHEIS) to validate outcomes. Programs must meet federal performance thresholds, including:

- ≥70% completion rate, and
- ≥70% job placement rate, verified through UI wage records

Annual data matching ensures ongoing program eligibility and continuous improvement.

Transparent Processes

The State has established a standardized, publicly available process for program approval, including:

- Clearly defined criteria and submission requirements
- A structured review timeline with interagency coordination
- A formal appeals process with independent review and consistent timelines

These processes ensure fair and transparent treatment across all eligible institutions.

Value and Student Protection

Arkansas incorporates the value-added earnings (VAE) analysis, comparing program cost to completer wages, to ensure programs provide a positive return on investment for students and taxpayers.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Approved programs are subject to annual review and re-certification, tied to institutional Program Participation Agreements. The State will maintain ongoing alignment with workforce needs through regular updates to labor market data and employer engagement strategies.

Arkansas's Workforce Pell implementation ensures that public investment supports programs that are aligned to employer demand, validated by outcomes, and designed to advance student success and workforce competitiveness.
