



Workforce Pell Part I: Program Overview

5.15.2026



Workforce Pell Program

- As outlined in the H.R. 1 - One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025, WFP expands Pell Grant eligibility to high-quality, short-term workforce programs aligned to labor market demand.
- WFP extends traditional Pell eligibility to include individuals with a bachelor's degree, allowing qualified students to use funds for short-term programs that satisfy the guardrails established in H.R. 1.
- Student eligibility based on need, as determined by FAFSA.
- Program launch date: July 1, 2026



Workforce Pell Program

- AHEAD Committee reached consensus agreeing on regulatory framework on 12/12/25.
- Notice of Proposed Rulemaking 3/8/26, 30-day window for public comment, closed 4/8/26.
- Final rules to be released any time.
- Governors must approve individual WFP programs to certify eligibility requirements are met prior to U.S. DOE approval.
- States have purview to design their review and approval process.



Workforce Pell Program 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 Pell Program Eligibility

- Must be offered by Title-IV eligible institutions.
- Must meet programmatic eligibility for the 12 months immediately preceding certification by the Governor for inclusion in Workforce Pell.
- Professional skills training programs: 150-599 clock hours
- Credit programs: 4 to less than 16 semester or trimester hours, or 6 to less than 24 quarter hours
- 8 to less than 15 weeks of instruction*
- Must be aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry or occupation, as defined by the state's governor.
- Must meet the hiring requirements of potential employers

*Defined as any 7-consecutive-day period with at least one day of instruction or exam, or in distance education, at least one day of academic engagement



Workforce Pell Program Eligibility

- Must meet a 70% completion rate, within 150% of the normal time for completion.
- Must meet a 70% job placement rate, measured 180 days after completion.
- For initial award years 2026-27 through 2028-29, job placement is defined as the percentage of students who are employed at any point during the second quarter after exiting the program, regardless of whether they completed the program or whether the job is related to the field of study.
- Beginning in the 2029-2030 award year, job placement is defined as the percentage of students who are employed in the occupation for which the program prepares students (or in a comparable high-skill, high-wage or in-demand occupation) at any point during the second quarter after successfully completing the program.
- Programs that fail to meet 70/70 requirements must wait two years to reapply.



Workforce Pell Program Eligibility

- Must count for academic credit that can be accepted toward a certificate or degree program at one or more eligible institutions (which may include the eligible institution providing the program).
- Must provide a recognized postsecondary credential that is stackable and portable across more than one employer, or prepares students for employment in an occupation for which there is only one recognized postsecondary credential.



Workforce Pell Value-Added Earnings

- For each award year, a program's published tuition and fees may not exceed the value-added earnings (VAE) of students who are working, received a Pell Grant for enrollment in the program, and completed the program during the cohort period.
- VAE = median earnings of completer cohort (adjusted by Bureau of Economic Analysis regional price parity) – 150% of Federal Poverty Line
- Earnings derived from students who completed during a defined “cohort period”
 - Cohort period = award year that ends three full award years prior to the award year for which value-added earnings are calculated
 - VAE for 2029-30 based on 2025-26 cohort period
 - This means that no program will have VAE for at least 3 years
 - Program can still be eligible for a year with no VAE
 - Only includes students who received Pell



U.S. DOE VAE Example for AR

(Completer Cohort)

| College | State | 3-Year Median Earnings | Regional Price Parity Index | Adjusted 3-Year Median Earnings | 150% of Federal Poverty Line | Value-Added Earnings |
|----------------|-------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| XYZ University | AR | \$25,000 | 86.5 | \$28,902 | \$21,780 | \$7,122 |

- Adjusted Median Earnings = $(\$25,000 / 86.5) * 100 = \$28,902$
- Value Added Earnings = $(\$28,902 - \$21,780) = \$7,122$

...the cohort period for the 2030-31 award year includes completers who graduated during the 2026-27 award year. The 2026-27 award year ends June 30, 2027. The first full tax year following the award year is the 2028 tax year (January 1, 2028, through December 31, 2028), therefore, the 2028 tax year is tax year for which the Department would request earnings information for and use as the basis for calculating the program's value-added earnings.



Workforce Pell Program Eligibility

- Registered apprenticeships automatically qualify as meeting the requirements of providing an education aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations, and meeting the hiring needs of employers.
- May not be offered concurrently with Pell for any other educational program (including another Workforce Pell program).
- No more than 25% of a WP program may be offered by a Title IV-ineligible institution, in coordination with the eligible institution.
- Non-credit or reduced-credit remedial courses, including ESL, that are part of a for-credit Workforce Pell program are not Pell eligible.
- May be a distance education program, however correspondence, study abroad, and direct assessment programs (CBE) are not eligible.



Workforce Pell Program Eligibility

- Governors of two states may enter into a bilateral agreement allowing students located in one state to enroll via distance education in a WP program offered by an institution located in another state.
- The occupation for which the WP program prepares students must be on the high-skill, high-wage or in-demand occupations list of the state where the student is located and the program must meet the WP requirements in the state where the institution is located.
- The bilateral agreement must include data-sharing arrangements between the states to help states compute the program's completion and placement rates.
- This new provision places additional requirements on WP programs offered through distance learning that fall outside of the NC-SARA process that has facilitated state approval of distance learning programs generally.



Workforce Pell Program Amounts

- Prorated off the overall Pell Grant maximum (currently \$7,395 for 2025-2026)
- “Longer” WFP Program (14 weeks, 599 clock hours)
 - Maximum award: ~ \$3,980
 - Minimum award: ~ \$398
- “Shorter” WFP Program (8 weeks, 150 clock hours)
 - Maximum award: ~ \$1,232
 - Minimum award: ~ \$123
- Workforce Pell Grants count toward a student’s lifetime Pell Grant eligibility.



Pell Grants and/or Non-Federal Sources

- Consider/compare available funding other than WFP.
- Financial Aid Note: Pell Grant Ineligibility When Other Aid Covers Full Cost
 - OBBB does not allow students to receive Pell Grant funds during any period for which they also receive grant or scholarship aid from non-Federal sources—including States, eligible institutions, or private sources—that equals or exceeds their cost of attendance (COA) for such period.
 - An eligible institution must either reduce that student’s non-Federal grant or scholarship assistance to be less than their COA, insofar as such grant or assistance is within the institution’s control, or return all Pell Grant funds and cancel any future disbursements of such funds.



Potential Workforce Pell Programs

The Department shared [a document outlining what they see to be the most likely programs that will fit into the Workforce Pell framework](#). Examples included:

- Health-Related Programs (*Nursing Assistants/Aides; Phlebotomy Technicians; EMT Paramedics*)
- Commercial Driver's License & Vehicle Operation Programs
- Career & Technical-Related Programs (*Welding Technology/Welders; Automotive Mechanics; Fire Prevention/Fire Safety; Computer & Information Sciences*)
- Child Care-Related Programs (*Child Care Providers; Early Childhood Education Teachers*)



Potential Arkansas Workforce Pell Programs

- Credit: 737 programs 6 - 15 credit hours
- PST: 93 courses/programs 150-599 clock hours
- Most programs (credit and PST) do not meet the instructional week requirement.
- Previous AHEIS data collection did not reflect federal definition of instructional weeks, but this has been added to PST data files.

Arkansas Welding Programs

6-15 Credit Hours

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|----|--|----|--------------------------------|----|
| ARC Welding | 6 | Welding Technology | 9 | Welding Technology | 12 | General Welding Techniques | 15 |
| Welding Fundamentals | 6 | Pipe Welding | 9 | Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW) | 12 | Mild Steel Welding | 15 |
| Automotive Collision Welding | 6 | Gas Tungsten Arc Welding (TIG) | 9 | Welding Layout & Fabrication | 12 | Inert Gas Welding | 15 |
| MIG Welding | 6 | Gas Metal Arc Welding (MIG) | 9 | Pipe Welding | 12 | Welding | 15 |
| GSA Welding | 6 | Welding Technology | 9 | GMAW (MIG) Welding | 12 | Welding | 15 |
| Weld Inspection | 7 | Aluminum Welding | 9 | SMAW Welding | 12 | Structural Welding | 15 |
| Structural and Pipe Welding | 8 | Shielded Metal Arc Welding (STICK) | 9 | GTAW (TIG) Welding | 12 | TIG Welding Technology | 15 |
| Pipe Welding-GMAW/FCAW | 8 | Tungsten Inert Gas (TIG) Welding | 9 | Structural Steel Pipe Welding | 12 | Advanced Welding/Manufacturing | 15 |
| Pipe Welding-GTAW | 8 | MIG Welding | 9 | Welding | 12 | Combination Pipe Welding | 15 |
| Pipe Welding-SMAW | 8 | SMAW Welding | 10 | Pipe Welding | 12 | | |
| Welding | 8 | Gas Metal Arc Welding | 10 | Welding Technology | 12 | | |
| Pipe Welding | 8 | Welding Applications and Procedures | 10 | Manufacturing Welding | 12 | | |
| Welding Layout & Pipefitting | 8 | Welding | 10 | Welding General | 12 | | |
| SMAW Welding | 8 | Welding | 10 | Welding | 13 | | |
| TIG Welding | 8 | Advanced Pipe Welding | 11 | Gas Metal Arc Welding (GMAW) | 13 | | |
| MIG Welding | 8 | ARC Welding | 12 | Welding Technology, Construction Welding | 13 | | |
| Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW) | 8 | MIG Welding | 12 | Welding | 14 | | |
| Tungsten Inert Gas (TIG) Welding | 8 | TIG Welding | 12 | Inert Gas Welding | 14 | | |
| Metal Inert Gas (MIG) Welding | 8 | Welding: Layout & Fabrication | 12 | | | | |

Occupation Rating Methodology



Each occupation is rated from 1 to 5 stars based on four factors:



Demand



Growth



Earnings



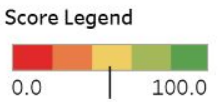
Retention

Arkansas' Demand Occupations List (Projected Employment Opportunities List) methodology is being replaced, effective July 1, 2026.



Arkansas Occupations

| Occupations | SOC | Employment | Average Wage | Education | Demand Score | Growth Score | Retention Score | Earning Score | Rating | View Details |
|---|---------|------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|--------|----------------------|
| Accountants and Auditors | 13-2011 | 9,274 | \$75,725 | Bachelor's degree | 64 | 64 | 57 | 59 | ★★★★ | View |
| Actors | 27-2011 | 165 | N/A | Some college, no degree | 29 | 20 | 61 | 1 | ★★ | View |
| Actuaries | 15-2011 | 169 | \$134,990 | Bachelor's degree | 35 | 49 | 54 | 71 | ★★★★ | View |
| Acupuncturists | 29-1291 | 23 | \$89,750 | Master's degree | 13 | 35 | 45 | 63 | ★★ | View |
| Adhesive Bonding Machine Operators and Tenders | 51-9191 | 238 | \$46,823 | High school diploma or equivalent | 22 | 1 | 57 | 48 | ★ | View |
| Administrative Law Judges, Adjudicators, and Hearing Officers | 23-1021 | 341 | \$63,387 | Doctoral or professional degree | 18 | 1 | 37 | 48 | ★ | View |
| Administrative Services Managers | 11-3012 | 1,092 | \$94,817 | Bachelor's degree | 49 | 49 | 45 | 57 | ★★★★ | View |



Area View

Sort Order

Education

Rating

Counties included:
 All counties in Arkansas



Tentative Next Steps

- Governor's Office has approved the WFP Implementation Plan
- May 21 Governor's Representative (ADHE) will present Plan to the AWDB.
- May 22: ADHE will announce the Plan and approved SOCs.
- June: Institutions submit new Workforce Pell program applications to ADHE.
- June–July: Governor's Office, ADHE, and ACOM review submissions to determine if the programs meet the requirements; AR Data is consulted to confirm outcomes using SLDS and UI Wage Data.
- July: Governor's representative (ADHE) submits a list of programs meeting requirements to the State Workforce Board for review/approval.
- End of July: Governor's representative (ADHE) notifies institutions of program approval status and submits to the U.S. Department of Education.

*Pending
AWDB
approval
of Plan.*

Questions or Comments
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