



ECE Workforce Policy Highlight

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Workforce Pell and the Early Care and Education Sector

Key Considerations for States and Higher Education Institutions

Mallory Warner, Julianna Carlson, Bonnie Solomon, and Sherri Castle

National ECE Workforce Center Policy Highlights provide a focused look at policies relevant to the ECE workforce. These topics emerge from the Center's scan of the research and policy landscapes and technical assistance activities with states and programs.

Introduction

The new Workforce Pell Grant program^a, signed into law in 2025, represents a significant shift in federal financial aid and workforce development policy. Workforce Pell Grants expand Pell Grant^b eligibility from programs that are at least 16 weeks in length to short-term workforce-aligned training programs (i.e., 8-15 weeks) that lead to industry-recognized credentials. Such programs have historically been excluded from traditional Pell Grant funding because of their short duration and non-degree focus.^{1,2}

Traditional Pell Grants have been most accessible to students enrolled in degree or certificate programs, often creating barriers for part-time or short-term learners pursuing non-credit-bearing courses that allow for fast-track job training. Workforce Pell Grants fill this longstanding gap by making federal grant aid available for career-oriented training that aligns directly with labor market needs.^{3,4} Table 1 provides a comparison of the features of Traditional Pell Grants and the new Workforce Pell Grant program.

Glossary of Key Terms

Short-term program refers to programs ranging from 8-15 weeks that are eligible workforce programs (such as credentials or certificates).

Stackable refers to programs that result in transferable credit that can be applied toward a higher-level certificate or degree.

Workforce-aligned refers to programs that provide education aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations. For Workforce Pell Grants, those occupations are approved by state governors.

^a House Resolution 1 (H.R. 1) signed into law on July 4, 2025, and beginning on July 1, 2026 amended existing Pell Grant statutes to expand the Traditional Pell Grant program to include Workforce Pell Grants. The U.S. Department of Education issued its [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on March 9, 2026](#) (91 FR 11378), with public comments accepted through April 8, 2026. At the time of publication, the public comment period had closed but final regulations had not yet been published.

^b Pell Grants are a type of need-based federal financial aid that do not have to be repaid.

Workforce Pell Grants differ from Traditional Pell Grants in several key ways beyond program length. Eligible programs must be between 150 and 599 clock hours (or 4-15 semester/trimester credit hours), completed in 8 to 15 weeks, and align with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations as determined by state governors in consultation with State Workforce Development Boards.⁵

Critically, these short-term programs must be stackable—meaning they must articulate into degree pathways and award academic credit that counts toward at least one certificate or degree program at an eligible institution.⁶ This stackability requirement ensures that the short-term programs serve as on-ramps to further education rather than dead-end credentials. Additionally, programs must meet rigorous accountability standards: a 70% completion rate (within 150% of normal time), a 70% job placement rate (measured at 180 days post-completion), and a value-added earnings requirement for which median graduate earnings must exceed program tuition and fees.⁷

Unlike Traditional Pell recipients, students in short-term programs are eligible only for Pell Grants and cannot access other federal student aid such as direct loans, federal work-study, or Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG).⁸ These distinctive features position Workforce Pell Grants as a performance-based, workforce-focused complement to the broader Pell Grant program.

The Opportunity

For the early care and education (ECE) workforce, Workforce Pell Grants present an opportunity to support entry-level credentials and stackable career pathways (see glossary of key terms) and short-term certificates and credentials—that can help expand access to training and strengthen the pipeline of qualified educators into the field.^c However, maximizing this opportunity will require intentional cross-sector collaboration—among institutions of higher education (IHE), state workforce development agencies, early childhood lead agencies, employers, and other partners—to design aligned pathways, ensure quality, and meet federal outcomes requirements (e.g., completion, job placement, earnings measures).^{9,10} At the same time, key features of Workforce Pell Grants, including the state determination of program eligibility and federal determination that the program meets certain accountability benchmarks, may pose challenges for the ECE sector.^{11,12}



Multi-Sector & Multi-Partner Collaboration in Systems Change for the ECE Workforce

This research-to-practice brief outlines best practices and strategies for building and sustaining multi-sector and multi-partner collaboration—helping state and local leaders align around shared outcomes and goals.

[Read the brief on our website.](#)

This policy highlight offers key considerations for state ECE workforce systems leaders and IHEs as they consider the inclusion of ECE short-term credential programs in their state's Workforce Pell Grant framework. These key considerations include identifying ECE as an in-demand sector or occupation,

^c State early childhood professional development systems include a range of credentials beyond the Child Development Associate (CDA) and college degrees, including director credentials, infant/toddler specialist certifications, and tiered teacher credentials. These credentials are documented in state professional development registries and quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS), though no comprehensive national inventory currently exists. Examples include the Wisconsin Registry (<https://wregistry.org/>), Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS director credential requirement (<https://www.arcadia.edu/majors-and-programs/pa-director-credential/>), Massachusetts' EEC certifications (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/get-an-eec-professional-certification>), and Maryland's tiered credential system (<https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/>).

balancing tuition and wage gains, navigating completion and job placement mandates, meeting requirements for accelerated, stackable credentials, and building institutional alignment and uptake.

Table 1. Traditional Pell vs Workforce Pell Grants

Feature	Traditional Pell Grant ^{13,14}	Workforce Pell Grant ^{15,16,17,18,19}
Purpose	Support access to degree and certificate programs	Target short-term, workforce-aligned training tied to workforce needs
Program Length	≥15 weeks / ≥600 clock hours	8–15 weeks, 150–599 clock hours
Program Type	Primarily credit-bearing/clock-hour programs	Credit or non-credit (including clock-hour programs)
Enrollment Requirements	Often requires at least half-time enrollment for meaningful funding levels	Designed for short-term, flexible enrollment
Target Population	Low- and moderate-income college students	Low- and moderate-income students seeking short-term workforce aligned credentials
Fields of Study	Broad—any eligible academic program	Must align to “high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand” industry sectors or occupations, as determined by the state, following federal rules
Institution Eligibility	Title IV ^d -eligible institutions	Title IV institutions, but programs require individual state approval
Program Approval	Institution-level approval through states, federal government, and federally recognized accreditation	State + federal approval required (Governor/workforce board + U.S. Dept. of Education)
Accountability Requirements	General institutional accountability (completion, loan default, etc.). New “do no harm” law also requires most Pell programs to demonstrate sufficient earnings.	Program-level accountability (e.g., ~70% completion and job placement, baseline earnings requirements)
Connection to Employment	Generally not required, except for licensure requirements	Required to meet the hiring requirements of potential employers in the sector/occupation, meeting minimum earning baselines
Stackability Requirement	Not required	Required to articulate into credits for a related certificate or degree program

^d Title IV refers to the section of the Higher Education Act of 1965 that authorizes federal financial aid programs, such as Pell Grants, at accredited institutions approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

Feature	Traditional Pell Grant ^{13,14}	Workforce Pell Grant ^{15,16,17,18,19}
Student Eligibility	<p>Based on financial need (Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA) and receipt of aid from non-federal sources.</p> <p>Counts toward Lifetime Eligibility Used (LEU)</p> <p>Students with defaulted federal loans ineligible</p> <p>Students with bachelor's degrees are not eligible</p>	<p>Based on financial need (FAFSA) and receipt of grant aid from non-federal sources.</p> <p>Counts toward LEU</p> <p>Students with defaulted federal loans ineligible</p> <p>Students who are accepted into, or have earned, a graduate degree are not eligible (but bachelor's degree holders are eligible)</p>
Funding Structure	Annual award to student based on their financial need and part-time or full-time enrollment (referred to as "enrollment intensity")	Award to student is prorated based on their financial need and program length (e.g., students can receive a higher grant amount for longer programs)
Use in Early Care and Education (ECE)	Widely used for associate's and bachelor's degrees in ECE and related fields	Potential to support the issuance of specialist credentials, certificates, and entry-level credentials

Considerations for State Agencies and IHEs

Workforce Pell Grants present a significant opportunity to bolster the ECE pipeline by supporting accelerated, stackable credential programs. State agencies and IHEs will need to carefully consider whether and how to align their current early childhood offerings with the specific requirements laid out in the federal guidelines.

States and institutions will vary in their readiness to establish short-term programs eligible for Workforce Pell Grants across several dimensions, including the extent to which their existing credential or certificate programs meet federal guidelines, the data they have available, the infrastructure that is in place to support cross-sector collaboration, and their broader policy and funding landscapes.

Workforce Pell Grants are expected to launch in 2026, but states and institutions that are not yet positioned to participate may be able to do so in future years. The considerations below are intended to be useful regardless of where a state or institution is in the process of developing programs that are eligible for Workforce Pell Grants.

Key Terms in Workforce Development Policy

Workforce Pell Grants are intended to bridge two well-established areas for education and skill-building: higher education and workforce development.^e Key terms used in the establishment of Workforce Pell Grants are already used in workforce development systems, primarily the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Title I (WIOA) and the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (“Perkins V”).^g Further, the statute authorizing Workforce Pell Grants requires connection to state’s existing definitions in WIOA and Perkins.

Key Term	Pell Statute Requirements
<p>“High skill” is used in federal statute across Workforce Pell, WIOA, and Perkins V. States define “high skill,” and nearly all states have identified “high skill” as an occupation that requires training above a high school education.^{e,f}</p>	<p>Statute does <i>not</i> require that the state definition of “high-skill” align with state definitions in WIOA or Perkins.</p>
<p>“High wage” is also used in federal statute in Workforce Pell, WIOA, and Perkins V. It is not defined at the federal level. States establish their own benchmarks and definitions of “high wage,” and this definition varies widely by state.^{e,f}</p>	<p>Statute requires that the state definition of “high-wage” for Workforce Pell Grants must align to the state’s definition of “high-wage” in their Perkins program.</p>
<p>“In demand” is defined in federal statute, albeit vaguely to allow flexibility to meet state needs. In WIOA statute:^h</p> <p><i>“(A) In general, the term “in-demand industry sector or occupation” means—(i) an industry sector that has a substantial current or potential impact (including through jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement) on the State, regional, or local economy, as appropriate, and that contributes to the growth or stability of other supporting businesses, or the growth of other industry sectors; or (ii) an occupation that currently has or is projected to have a number of positions (including positions that lead to economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement) in an industry sector so as to have a significant impact on the State, regional, or local economy, as appropriate.”</i></p>	<p>Statute requires that the state definition of “in-demand” for Workforce Pell Grants must align to the state’s definition of “in-demand” in their WIOA program.</p>

Sources: ^e [Workforce Pell: A Overview for Governors](#) (National Governors Association, 2026); ^f [High Skill, High Wage, and Now High Stakes](#) (New America, 2026); ^g [Aligning to Opportunity: State Approaches to Setting High Skill, High Wage and In Demand](#) (Advance CTE, 2020); ^h Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act ([29 U.S.C. 3102](#))

Notes: Workforce Opportunity Investment Act (Title I) is overseen by the U.S. Department of Labor. States receive funds via formula grants, submit state plans every four years to the U.S. Department of Labor, and update those plans two years into the plan cycle. Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (“Perkins V”, initially enacted as Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006) is overseen by the U.S. Department of Education. Like WIOA, Perkins V is also a formula grant to state. State education lead agencies submit plans to the U.S. Department of Education and have the option to submit a “Combined Plan” with the WIOA state plan.

1 Consideration 1: ECE as an in-demand sector or occupation

The challenge: To qualify for Workforce Pell Grants, ECE must be recognized by a state as a “high-skill,” “high-wage,” or “in-demand” sector or occupation that significantly impacts the regional economy and supports the growth of other industries.²⁰ ECE may be best positioned as an “in-demand” sector.

The consideration: While the field meets this threshold through sheer volume, with an estimated need for over 160,000 replacement workers annually nationwide,²¹ the most compelling argument for its recognition as an eligible sector is ECE’s role as essential economic infrastructure. A growing workforce requires reliable child care; without it, states cannot effectively recruit or retain the employers or workers needed to support other high-growth sectors.^{22,23} By supporting parents’ participation in the workforce, ECE is a foundational investment that enables stability and growth across other industries.

As noted in the exhibit “Key Terms in Workforce Development Policy,” states vary widely in their definition of “in-demand” sectors and occupations. In fact, 19 states include wage criteria in their operational definitions of “in-demand” in ways that exclude the ECE sector because of its low wages.²⁴ As states adopt or refine definitions of “in-demand” for Workforce Pell Grants (in alignment with WIOA), they should consider whether their existing definitions are unnecessarily excluding the ECE sector. This is especially important for states wishing to bolster other industries and attract potential employers to their states through Workforce Pell Grant-supported workforce development. For other industries to thrive, child care is needed as an underlying part of the infrastructure.

Questions for state agencies and IHEs to consider:

- What data do you already have to make the case for including early educators as an in-demand occupation? What additional data might you need? For example, do you have current data about workforce needs, employment rates, or child care deserts?
- How can you measure the broader economic benefit of an early educator who completes this training program, for example, in terms of the number of parents they enable to enter or remain in the local workforce?
- What partnerships could you build or strengthen to help frame ECE as a core component of the local business infrastructure? For example, could you partner with state or regional economic agencies, chambers of commerce, or local employers?

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Consideration 2: Balancing tuition and wage gains

The challenge: The Workforce Pell Grant program requires that the total cost of tuition and fees does not exceed the "earnings gain" that can be attributed to the credential.ⁱ

The consideration: This requirement creates a significant challenge for the ECE sector, where wages are historically low. Nationwide, the median wage for early educators is \$13.07 per hour.²⁵ Unlike other industries, the cost cannot realistically be passed on to the consumer, as families already face many barriers to affording child care.

At the same time, many states have existing initiatives—such as wage supplements, pay equity pilots, or apprenticeship programs—aimed at improving compensation for the ECE workforce. There may be creative ways to leverage these initiatives to increase the earnings side of the calculation. Additionally, state could consider creating wage scales aligned with career pathways to ensure that any new credentials—including short-term credentials—lead to higher wages.



Strengthening Wage Scale Development in New Mexico

This case study report summarizes the National ECE Workforce Center's work with New Mexico focused on ECE career ladders, compensation, and workplace policies.

[Read the brief on our website.](#)

Questions for state agencies and IHEs to consider:

- What wage supplement or stipend programs already exist in your state that could help increase earnings for those who complete the program?
- Could the program be paired with an apprenticeship that has built-in wage increases?
- Are there opportunities to braid or blend other sources of funding to subsidize the cost of instruction to keep tuition low (e.g., Child Care Development Fund, Preschool Development Grant)?
- What type of data do you have on wages in the ECE sector? For example, can you identify local economic regions within a state that demonstrate higher earnings outcomes that align with federal eligibility requirements? Do you have access to data that is broken down by job type (e.g., assistant or lead teachers, administrators)?
- If existing state or institutional funding—such as T.E.A.C.H. scholarships or subsidized tuition—currently covers costs that Workforce Pell Grants could absorb, how might those freed-up resources be redirected to support wage increases or stipends that improve earnings for people who complete the program?

ⁱ Specifically, workforce programs must pass a "value-added earnings test" to demonstrate that the average earnings gains of students receiving grants are equal to or greater than the program's tuition prices. Average earnings gains are calculated as the difference between the median income of program graduates three years after completion (adjusted for geographic region) and 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Line. If workforce programs cannot pass this test, they will have to reduce tuition to access the Pell grants. Per proposed rules from the U.S. Department of Education, short-term programs must meet this requirement for the 2030-2031 school year, after IHEs have had time to gather program-specific earnings data.

Source: Dept of Education's [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#)

3 Consideration 3: Navigating completion and job placement mandates

The challenge: To qualify for Workforce Pell Grants, programs must demonstrate that they have at least a 70 percent completion rate and 70 percent job placement rate. These benchmarks are designed to ensure that programs lead directly to employment.

The consideration: Because many ECE training programs already cater to non-traditional students,²⁶ institutions may have significant experience providing specific supports, like flexible scheduling or advising, to help students achieve the high completion rates required by Workforce Pell Grants. At the same time, the ECE sector may face unique challenges with how job placement is tracked and verified. Because many ECE program participants are already employed in the field, states will need to consider whether job placement includes the retention and/or advancement of current educators rather than just new hires.^j

Additionally, because the ECE workforce is distributed across many types of employers (e.g., public schools, private centers, home-based child care programs, Head Start), collecting employment data will require robust infrastructure and coordination. While 44 states and Washington, D.C. maintain child care workforce registries, these systems vary in both participation rates and data quality.²⁷

Questions for state agencies and IHEs to consider:

- What pre-enrollment supports might potential students need to make informed decisions about whether to participate in a short-term program? How can you ensure they understand the requirements, expectations, and potential outcomes?
- What academic supports—such as advising, peer cohorts, or flexible scheduling—should be integrated to ensure completion and quality, particularly for non-traditional students?
- What data and resources are needed to demonstrate the 70% job placement rate required for eligibility? What existing systems, such as state child care registries, can be leveraged to track job placement and employment status, with little administrative burden for educators or employers?
- How can you work with local employers to build connections that help increase successful job placement? For example, could IHEs host job fairs for program graduates?
- How might you best utilize on-site child care programs within institutions that already have ECE credential or degree programs?
- How will job placement be defined for students who are already employed in the ECE field, and remain with their current employer after they complete the program? Does their retention count as job placement?

^j In looking at WIOA for precedent, it may be the case that incumbent workers (currently working participants in the short-term credential programs) will count towards job placement accountability metrics. WIOA currently has a [performance indicator about Effectively Serving Employers](#), in which case retaining employees counts favorably towards this indicator.

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Consideration 4: Meeting requirements for accelerated, stackable credentials

The challenge: To be eligible for Workforce Pell Grants, programs must have been in operation for at least one year and provide a stackable credential that is part of a broader pathway towards a degree. The program also must be compressed into 8-15 weeks, or 150-599 hours of instructional time (referred to in statute as clock hours).

The consideration: Many states and institutions already have accelerated non-degree programs in ECE that meet these requirements. Several states have state-specific ECE teacher or administrator credentials offered by community and technical colleges. Additionally, many states have been moving towards ECE career pathways featuring stackable credentials. This existing work can be leveraged to meet the Workforce Pell Grants guidelines, ensuring that credits earned at one institution can be applied towards future education. At the same time, states in the process of redesigning their career pathways and establishing new stackable credentials may lack the full year of outcome data required for eligibility.

Questions for state agencies and IHEs to consider:

- What credential programs already exist for early educators in your state? Do they meet the requirements in the federal guidelines? If not, could they be redesigned to do so—for example, by compressing an existing course sequence into an accelerated format to meet the required timeframe?
- Are there credential programs focused on leadership roles in ECE, such as program administrators or directors, which could help address succession needs in the field?
- What data do you already collect about students in short-term credential or certificate programs?
- To what extent are education and workforce data linked in your state for the ECE sector? For example, could you use unemployment insurance records? Does your state have a statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) that links student data across higher education and into the workforce?
- To what extent is there coordination across sectors and/or agencies in your state related to ECE career pathways? For example, what advisory groups, committees, or convenings already exist that could support this work?
- How can you operate within the requirements to provide enough flexibility for people already working in ECE? What types of support, like flexible scheduling or hybrid courses, could help working students take advantage of this new opportunity?

5 Consideration 5: Building institutional alignment and uptake

The Challenge: While Workforce Pell Grants create a new funding opportunity for short-term ECE credentials, states and IHEs will need to determine whether developing or adapting programs to meet federal requirements is feasible and worthwhile within their specific context. This includes assessing alignment with institutional priorities, structures, and capacity, as well as whether these programs can be integrated into the broader mission rather than viewed as an add-on that contributes to administrative burden.

The Consideration: Rather than viewing Workforce Pell Grant-eligible short-term programs as creating an entirely new credential category, institutions can position eligible programs within their existing ECE pathways and workforce development infrastructure. Institutions already operating certificate programs, non-credit workforce training, or continuing education may find that Workforce Pell provides an opportunity to formalize and fund programming that has historically operated at the margins of traditional financial aid. For institutions observing low completion rates in current ECE certificate programs, Workforce Pell Grant's shorter format and financial support may address barriers (such as program length, scheduling constraints, or cost) that prevent working adults from completing the program.

States can further support uptake by integrating Workforce Pell into broader workforce development planning processes, leveraging technical assistance to help institutions navigate federal requirements, and using targeted grants to offset start-up costs for program development and quality improvement. When positioned strategically within the broader ecosystem (rather than as standalone offerings) short-term programs supported through Workforce Pell Grants can serve as entry points that strengthen, rather than compete with, degree pathways and career advancement opportunities in the ECE workforce.

Questions for state agencies and IHEs to consider:

- How well do short-term ECE programs eligible for Workforce Pell Grant funding align with local employment needs, institutional priorities, and broader career pathways, including existing degree programs and institutional funding models?
- How can programs be designed to stack into more advanced credentials or pathways that support longer-term career and wage progression?
- What state resources, incentive funding, technical assistance, or employer partnerships could help offset institutional costs and support program development, implementation, and data reporting—particularly during the period before a new program becomes eligible for Workforce Pell Grants funding?
- What communication and outreach strategies are needed—for prospective students, employers, and the broader ECE community—to build awareness of short-term credential pathways, how they connect to longer-term career and educational opportunities, and the potential wage gains associated with completion? How can you best support communication and outreach?

Figure 1. Roles and responsibilities at federal, state, and local levels^{28,29}

FEDERAL LEVEL

U.S. Department of Education

- Final approval of eligible workforce programs
- Award Pell Grants to eligible students
- Calculate value-added earnings metric
- Monitor completion rates (70% threshold)
- Monitor job placement rates (70% threshold)
- Publish value-added earnings annually
- Enforce accountability requirements

U.S. Department of Labor

- Partnership with Dept. of Education on implementation
- Support alignment with Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs

STATE LEVEL

Governor

- Primary program approval authority
- Consult with State Workforce Board
- Certify programs meet statutory requirements
- Establish approval policies/processes
- Review completion & placement data
- Approve bilateral agreements with other states

State Workforce Development Board

- Consultation on program approval
- Align with WIOA requirements
- Coordinate with local workforce boards

State Higher Education Agency

- Coordinate institutional participation
- Ensure credit articulation pathways exist
- Verify stackability to certificates/degrees
- Monitor data systems for completion rates
- Support bilateral state agreements
- Oversee quality assurance

State Early Childhood Agency

- Define ECE credential requirements
- Verify credentials are recognized & stackable
- Ensure alignment with state ECE quality standards and licensing, state certificates
- Confirm programs meet sector needs

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Eligible Institutions (Higher Education)

- Design 8–15-week ECE programs
- Apply for Governor approval
- Submit completion & placement rate data
- Keep tuition/fees at or below value-added earnings
- Ensure stackability and credit articulation
- Award Pell Grants to eligible students

Accrediting Agencies for Higher Education

- Include programs within grant of accreditation
- May establish substantive change processes
- Review program quality (optional, per agency policy)
- Monitor written arrangements ($\leq 25\%$ with non-eligible entities)

EMPLOYER & COMMUNITY LEVEL

Early Childhood Education Employers

- Accept graduates into ECE positions
- Verify hiring needs to state agencies
- Provide input on skills/competencies needed
- May partner via written arrangements ($\leq 25\%$)

Other Key Stakeholders

- Students: Provide feedback, complete Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Consumer advocates: Monitor quality & outcomes
- Technical assistance providers: Support implementation

Conclusion

The introduction of Workforce Pell Grants represents an opportunity for the ECE sector to address workforce shortages through accelerated, stackable credentials. In addition to providing a source of funding, these grants can be a way to expand ECE career pathways and integrate them into the broader economic infrastructure. As states and IHEs evaluate their readiness for the expected launch of Workforce Pell Grants later this year, we have identified five main areas of alignment with federal guidelines for consideration:

1. **Economic framing:** Establishing ECE as an “in-demand” sector by highlighting its role as an essential piece of infrastructure that provides stability and growth for other industry sectors.
2. **Financial viability:** Balancing the reality of the ECE sector’s low wages with the federal requirements to demonstrate earnings gains by identifying creative solutions, such as wage supplements or tuition subsidies.
3. **Accountability and data:** Strengthening academic supports and data systems to achieve and track the 70 percent completion and job placement mandates.
4. **Programmatic alignment:** Redesigning and aligning existing programs or developing new offerings that meet the requirements to be short-term and stackable.
5. **Institutional buy-in:** Relevant state agencies and IHEs collaborating to align short-term programs with the broader, long-term vision of IHEs and their career and degree pathways.

Whether a state or IHE is prepared to participate immediately or is building toward future eligibility, these considerations can be used as a roadmap to strengthen cross-sector partnerships and expand accessible career pathways in ECE.

Additional Resources

[An Analysis of Short-Term Postsecondary Programs](#)

[Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act Section by Section Summary](#)

[One Big Beautiful Bill Act \(H.R. 1, P.L. 119-21\), Section 83002: Workforce Pell Grants](#)

[Putting Degrees with Reach: Strategies for Financing Early Educator Degrees](#)

[Workforce Pell Grants Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#)

[Workforce Pell is Coming. Are State Legislatures Ready?](#)

[Workforce Pell What You Need to Know](#)



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Who Are We?

The National Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Center is a joint research and technical assistance center that equips state and local leaders to drive change in ECE workforce policy. This center uses a research-to-practice model to advance compensation and career advancement for early educators.

Learn more and get in touch with us at our website:

www.nationaleceworkforcecenter.org

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