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MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents
Florida College System Presidents
Presidents and Chief Executive Officers of Institutions Licensed by the Commission for Independent Education

FROM: Ashley Meros, Ph.D., Chancellor, Division of Career and Adult Education
Kathryn Hebda, Chancellor, Division of Florida Colleges
Tiffany Hurst, Executive Director, Commission for Independent Education

DATE: September 17, 2026

SUBJECT: Workforce Pell: Expanding Access to Short-Term, High-Value Career Training

Workforce Pell is an expansion of the Federal Pell Grant program enacted by the Working Families Tax Cut Act. Awards are drawn from the same Pell funding stream, determined from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), counted against the student's lifetime Pell eligibility of 12 full-time semesters and administered under existing Title IV rules, including Return of Title IV Funds and Satisfactory Academic Progress.

For the first time in the history of higher education in the United States, Pell Grants may support short-term, high-quality workforce training that historically fell below the clock-hour and week thresholds of traditional undergraduate Pell. Eligible workforce programs must last at least eight weeks but less than 15 weeks of instructional time and provide 150 to 599 clock hours (or the credit-hour equivalent).¹ The statutory purpose is to move learners, including working adults, career changers, and, in specified cases, bachelor's degree holders, into high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations quickly and with little or no student debt.

The U.S. Department of Education, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor, published the final rule on May 19, 2026. As noted in the Department's July 1, 2026 memo, Florida is expanding access to Workforce Pell, creating new opportunities for Floridians to earn high-value credentials, enter in-demand careers and build a stronger economic future.²

¹ 34 CFR 690.92–690.95; Florida Department of Education, [Workforce Pell Program Policies and Procedures Guide](#), pp. 6–7 (Sept. 2026).

² [Florida Workforce Pell Certification and State Validation Process](#)

On August 24, 2026, Governor Ron DeSantis delegated the authority to execute required certifications and attestations to the Commissioner of Education. Accordingly, the Florida Department of Education (Department) administers the state approval and validation process under the Commissioner's delegated authority. Institutions should work directly through the Department's established process.

Expanded Statewide Program List for Florida College System (FCS) and School District Institutions

The Department has expanded Florida's statewide Workforce Pell Program Inventory to include 110 eligible programs at Florida College System institutions and school district postsecondary institutions:

- 33 Career Certificate programs;
- 2 Applied Technology Diploma programs; and,
- 75 College Credit Certificate (or Technical Certificate) programs.

These programs prepare students for careers in fields such as health care, public safety, advanced manufacturing, information technology, transportation, construction and business. The current statewide list is available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/20958/WorkforcePellEligiblePrograms.pdf>.

The statewide list establishes state-level eligibility for a program type. It does *not* automatically authorize every institution offering that program to disburse Workforce Pell funds. Each institution must demonstrate that its specific offering meets all applicable state and federal requirements.

Of those Workforce Pell programs on Florida's statewide list, institutions must now document that its own program offering meets applicable Workforce Pell requirements. Specific application and validation procedures are now included in the Department's *Workforce Pell Policies and Procedures* document available at <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/workforcepell/>. Upon institutional review for eligible programs, the institution should submit its request to the Department using the federal certification form.³ The application package, with supporting documentation should be emailed to WorkforcePell@fldoe.org.

Following state validation, the institution must complete the applicable U.S. Department of Education process before Workforce Pell funds may be provided to eligible students.⁴

Immediate Next Steps for FCS institutions and School Districts

Institutions should:

³ [Workforce Pell Program Certification Form](#)

⁴ [Workforce Pell Program Policies and Procedures Guide](#), p. 15 (Sept. 2026).

- Review the statewide inventory and identify program types offered locally;
- Confirm that each institution-specific offering meets all applicable requirements;
- Coordinate academic, workforce, institutional research and financial-aid staff;
- Complete the federal certification form and assemble supporting documentation; and
- Submit completed materials to WorkforcePell@fldoe.org for review and validation.

Institutions should not advertise that students may receive Workforce Pell for a program until all required state and federal steps are complete.

Registered Apprenticeship: Application-Based Approval

Registered Apprenticeships (RA) are also eligible for Workforce Pell. Under the final rule, a Title IV institution may deliver no more than 25 percent of an eligible workforce program through a written arrangement with an ineligible partner except where the program is a RA and where the RA is the related-instruction and/or the on-the-job component(s) of a RA, as defined in 29 CFR Part 29.⁵ In that case, 34 CFR 668.5(c)(3)(ii)(D)⁶ permits the ineligible RA sponsor, employer and/or related instruction provider to deliver more than 25 percent but less than 50 percent of the program, provided the remaining written-arrangement conditions are met, including a determination by the institution's accrediting agency that the arrangement meets the agency's standards. The related-instruction segment itself, and/or the on-the-job segment may qualify as the eligible workforce program if it meets the 8-to-under-15-week and 150-to-599-clock-hour criteria; a longer RA classroom instruction and/or on-the-job training may be structured as more than one such program if each segment independently meets those limits.

Registered Apprenticeship programs automatically satisfy the workforce-alignment and employer-hiring determinations, and a RA certificate of completion is a recognized postsecondary credential. Apprenticeships are not otherwise exempt from completion, employment and value-added earning standards, however. The eligible institution remains responsible for packaging and disbursing the grant, not the RA sponsor or employer.

Accordingly, RA will use a separate, application-based approval process.⁷ Unlike Career Certificate, College Credit Certificate and Applied Technology Diploma programs, RA programs will not be placed on a statewide approved program list.

This different approach reflects the unique structure of RA programs, which may involve an apprenticeship sponsor, one or more employers and a Title IV institution providing the related technical instruction. Eligibility must therefore be evaluated based on the specific program, partnership and instruction being proposed.

⁵ [29 CFR Part 29 - Labor Standards for the Registration of Apprenticeship Programs](#)

⁶ [34 CFR 668.5 - Written arrangements to provide educational programs.](#)

⁷ [Workforce Pell Program Policies and Procedures Guide](#), Section 1b, p.14 (Sept. 2026).

Under this process:

- The Title IV institution, in coordination with the RA sponsor, will submit a separate Workforce Pell apprenticeship application to WorkforcePell@fldoe.org;
- The Department will review the specific program and related technical instruction for compliance with applicable state and federal requirements;
- The Commissioner will approve qualifying applications under the authority delegated by the Governor; and
- Following state approval, the institution must complete all applicable federal Title IV requirements before Workforce Pell funds may be disbursed.

Approval will apply only to the specific RA offering and institutional partnership described in the application. It will not constitute approval of all programs in the same occupation or all related instruction offered by the institution or sponsor.

The separate RA application and submission instructions will be published on the Florida Workforce Pell implementation webpage.

Additional Participation Pathways and Ongoing Eligibility

The Department is developing tailored participation pathways for institutions licensed by the Commission for Independent Education and for qualifying Continuing Workforce Education offerings at all institutions. These programs are not categorically excluded from Workforce Pell; however, because the state does not maintain standardized data for every offering, eligibility will require an institution-initiated, program-specific review. Guidance, submission materials and eligible program lists will be published as these pathways are finalized.

The Department has established annual review and reconsideration procedures and is developing predictable submission windows, review timelines, and renewal procedures to support consistent statewide implementation. The Department will review the eligible-program list each year against labor-market demand and other criteria. Programs may be added, revised or removed. Institutions should expect to recertify programs when the institution's Program Participation Agreement is renewed and whenever Department requests updated outcome data.⁸

Failure to maintain the 70 percent completion standard, the 70 percent second-quarter employment standard, or the value-added earnings standard will result in a loss of eligibility under the federal rule.

⁸ [Workforce Pell Program Policies and Procedures Guide](#), pp. 16-17 (Sept. 2026).

Institutions are responsible for the accuracy of the data they certify. Misrepresentation of hours, outcomes, or credential alignment will be treated as a Title IV compliance matter.

Resources and Technical Assistance

The Department will host a live Florida Workforce Pell Implementation Webinar on September 29, 2026. The webinar will review the expanded list of 109 eligible programs, clarify the institution-specific certification and state-validation process, explain the separate application-based pathway for RA programs and outline next steps for Commission for Independent Education and State University System institutions and Continuing Workforce Education offerings.

Institution leaders, workforce program administrators, institutional research staff and financial-aid professionals are encouraged to participate in the webinar. Registration and access information will be distributed directly to institutions and posted on the Florida Workforce Pell implementation webpage in advance of the webinar.

Current program lists, forms, guidance, webinar information and future updates are available on the Florida Workforce Pell implementation webpage at <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/workforcepell/>.

The Department will continue providing direct guidance and technical assistance as institutions move through the certification process and as additional participation pathways are implemented.

Questions may be directed to WorkforcePell@fldoe.org.

AM/KH/TH

cc: State University System Presidents
School District Career and Technical Education Directors
School District Technical College Directors
Florida College System Workforce Administrators
Commission for Independent Education Institutional Administrators
Financial Aid Administrators
Ray Rodrigues, Chancellor, State University System
Paul O. Burns, Ed.D., Senior Chancellor
Suzanne Pridgeon, Chief Operations Officer and Chief Finance Officer
Alex Kelly, Secretary of Commerce
Adrienne Johnston, President, CareerSource Florida
Mark Wilson, President, Florida Chamber