



PAID WORK-BASED LEARNING TURNS TRAINING INTO JOBS



The passage of Workforce Pell reflects a seismic shift in how states can support workers and learners in skill building. For the first time, federal funds can be used to participate in short-term training aligned with in-demand career pathways. This is a strong step forward in expanding access to credentials and skills required for good jobs, but it is not enough to truly support economic mobility.

States will fall short of meeting the promise of Workforce Pell if support starts and ends with financial aid. For Workforce Pell to truly deliver on its promise of expanding opportunity for working people and helping employers hire with confidence, **states must adopt complementary policies – like paid work-based learning –** that are proven to strengthen outcomes for workers and employers.

TURNING ACCESS INTO OUTCOMES

Short-term training programs funded by Workforce Pell are not enough to ensure all learners have a good job. State leaders who advance policies of their own to strengthen the conditions for learner success will be best positioned to make the most of this expanded federal aid.

Paid work-based learning models allow participants, including Workforce Pell recipients who've completed short-term training programs, to gain additional skills required by employers through paid, hands-on experience. Both **job seekers** and **business owners** agree that paid work-based learning programs are a highly effective strategy for moving learners from training into employment.



Paid work-based learning and employer partnerships are key to strong outcomes. For the most part, people who did find a job participated in programs that had substantive links to employer partners and/or provided work-based learning opportunities. People whose programs didn't make those connections often struggled to turn credentials into employment.

From NSC's Report "Looking for Certainty: What People Have to Say about Short-Term Skills Training and the Path to a Good Job"





HOW STATE POLICIES CAN SUPPORT EFFECTIVE, PAID WORK-BASED LEARNING



1. MAKE EXPANDING WORK-BASED LEARNING A STATE PRIORITY:

States can adopt work-based learning expansion initiatives to focus resources on partnership development. States can direct resources to support state staff and partners in identifying target industries and populations that would benefit from greater access to paid work-based learning models. To realize this priority, states can also fund intermediary organizations to support the growth of work-based learning. Intermediary organizations can include sector partnerships that connect local employers, job seekers, and education and training providers.

2. INCENTIVIZE EMPLOYER PARTICIPATION IN WORK-BASED LEARNING:

States can incentivize employers, especially small businesses, to work with schools, colleges, and workforce organizations to create new paid work-based learning programs. This can include covering parts of participant wages and helping with training costs. By reducing the cost for employers, states can encourage more businesses to participate and offer high-quality programs.

- ▶ **Virginia invested \$14.5 MILLION** in state funding to launch [InternshipsVA](#). The program provides grants to small and midsized businesses to create high-quality paid internships for postsecondary students. This includes matching half of wages paid to participating students.
- ▶ **Maryland invested \$5 MILLION** in state funding to launch the [Maryland Apprenticeship Incentive Program](#), which helps employers – including small businesses – hire and train registered apprentices by covering costs of instruction expenses and supportive services.



3. FULLY SUPPORT WORKER PARTICIPATION IN WORK-BASED LEARNING:

States can establish work-based learning support funds to address participant barriers to access and completion of programs. States can help more learners leverage these pathways from work-based learning by dedicating funds to pay for basic needs like childcare and transportation. The expense of these needs is often a barrier for people seeking education and employment and could be covered by the state, including through leveraging of [federal funding streams](#).

94% OF VOTERS  support expanding opportunities for people to work and learn on the job through apprenticeships and work-based learning programs.

Source: National Skills Coalition, Nationwide Poll, 2024.