

STATE POLICIES THAT DELIVER ON WORKFORCE PELL'S PROMISE

CAREER NAVIGATION BUILDS PATHWAYS TO QUALITY CAREERS

Workforce Pell will expand access to short-term education and training programs that prepare workers for in-demand jobs. But access to federal financial aid alone isn't enough to ensure students understand their options, get connected to supports, complete training, or connect credentials to long-term career success.

Unequal access to **clear information**, supportive services, employer relationships, and professional networks makes it harder for students to make informed education and career decisions. These barriers are especially common for students from under-resourced communities—including Black, Latino, Indigenous, rural, immigrant, and low-income communities, as well as people with disabilities and justice-impacted people.

At the same time, Workforce Pell makes informed decision making more important than ever. While short-term credentials can lead to strong labor market outcomes, **returns vary widely** by field of study, credential quality, and whether students secure jobs aligned with their training.

Because Workforce Pell counts toward a student's lifetime Pell Grant eligibility, students need reliable

82% OF VOTERS



support increased funding for support services that help people complete skills training programs, including career counseling, childcare, and transportation assistance.

Source: National Skills Coalition, Nationwide Poll, 2024.

information early in their education and career journeys to ensure they invest limited federal aid in programs that align with their interests, career goals, and financial aspirations.

Career navigation helps students make informed education and career decisions by connecting them with trusted guidance, labor market information, supportive services, and employers, so they see real value from their investment. Strong career navigation **helps students choose** high-quality programs, complete training, enter quality careers, and, critically, overcome bias and structural barriers that can channel people into low-wage occupations.

CAREER NAVIGATION CONNECTS THE POLICIES THAT HELP WORKFORCE PELL SUCCEED.



Supportive Services:

Connects students to transportation, childcare, emergency aid, housing, and other supports that improve persistence and completion in short-term training programs.



Data:

Translates labor market information and education outcomes into actionable guidance that helps students choose quality programs tied to quality careers.



Sector Partnerships:

Connects students with employers, work-based learning, mentoring, and industry-informed career pathways, and connects employers to an expanded pool of skilled workers.





HOW STATES CAN STRENGTHEN CAREER NAVIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE

To maximize Workforce Pell's impact, states should invest in the people, partnerships, and systems that make high-quality career navigation available to every student. States should:

1. INVEST IN CAREER NAVIGATION CAPACITY AND EXPAND ACCESS.

Every student should have access to high-quality career navigation, regardless of where they begin their education or workforce journey. States can achieve this by making **sustained investments** to scale access to career navigators, career coaches, and similar professionals so students can access trusted guidance through the education, workforce, and community organizations they already rely on.

States should strengthen career navigation and **career coaching** through sustained funding for technical assistance, professional development, **certification opportunities**, and digital tools and training that enable navigation professionals to deliver consistent, high-quality services.

2. IMPROVE ACCESS TO TRANSPARENT, ACCURATE LABOR MARKET INFORMATION.

Career navigation is only as effective as the information available to students and the professionals who support them. States should invest in accessible, up-to-date **labor market information** that helps students, career navigation professionals, employers, and education providers make informed decisions.

Information should be timely, transparent, and easy to understand, including data on in-demand occupations, wages, required credentials, career pathways, employment outcomes, and regional workforce needs. States should equip career navigation professionals with the tools and training needed to interpret this information and translate it into personalized guidance that connects students to quality careers.

3. STRENGTHEN EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE SYSTEMS.

Career navigation is most effective when employers, education and training providers, workforce organizations, labor organizations, and community partners work together to create clear pathways into quality jobs. States should invest in **industry sector partnerships** and other regional collaborations that align education and training with local labor market needs.

These partnerships create **ongoing communication** between employers and education and training providers, helping ensure programs remain responsive to changing workforce needs while giving students clearer connections to employment. States should also support intermediary organizations that coordinate partnerships, facilitate employer engagement, expand work-based learning and mentoring opportunities, and help employers communicate transparent career pathways and the skills needed for advancement.