





Illinois Workforce Pell Implementation Update & Check-In

For Financial Aid Administrators

May 12, 2026



Purpose

- Share information about Illinois' Workforce Pell implementation progress and timeline
- Build a shared understanding of basic policy requirements
- Encourage financial aid administrators' involvement in campus-level planning to improve implementation and support students' participation in high-quality programs



Illinois' Goal for Workforce Pell

To maximize student access to high quality short-term workforce programs and expanded financial aid, while maintaining consumer protections.



A word about today



Please answer in the chat



Which response best describes where your institution is in the planning stages for Workforce Pell? (Choose any that apply.)

- a. Nothing so far.
- b. Early – trying to understand how it'll work.
- c. We have a point person assigned, and we *think* we'll apply.
- d. We have a team reviewing the data and discussing which programs we think might be eligible.
- e. We already know which programs we hope to put in applications for, and we're eager to promote them to students!
- f. I'm not sure – our financial aid office isn't part of discussions yet.

Please answer in the chat



If planning is underway on your campus, where is it happening (i.e., in what office)?

Is the financial aid office already included?



Pell for Workforce: Background

Background: Pell for Workforce



Program Requirements

- 8–14 weeks in length; 150–599 clock hours (or 4–15 semester hours)
- Can be offered online, but NOT a correspondence course, study abroad, or direct assessment course
- Must have been in existence for a minimum of 12 months
- Must meet stackability, portability, articulation, and employer validation requirements
- Must achieve a 70% completion rate and 70% job placement rate
- Must meet an earnings-based threshold



Student Eligibility

- Same eligibility criteria as traditional Pell Grant
- Students with bachelor's degrees ARE eligible (unlike traditional Pell)
- Students currently enrolled in or who have completed a graduate program are NOT eligible



Institutional Eligibility

- Title IV, accredited institutions only

Illinois Context Note: Workforce Pell & MAP for Short-Term Certificates

Federal Workforce Pell Grant

- Effective July 1, 2026, pending final State process
- In a program that is 8–14 weeks in length; 150–599 clock hours (or 4–15 semester hours)
- Need-based, with same student eligibility criteria as traditional Pell Grant,
- Students with bachelor's degrees ARE eligible (unlike traditional Pell); students currently enrolled in or who have completed a graduate program are NOT eligible
- Applied to any part of the total cost of attendance
- Eligibility at Title IV, accredited institutions only

- Must meet additional requirements related to completion rate, job placement, earnings, stackability, portability, etc. (See previous slide)



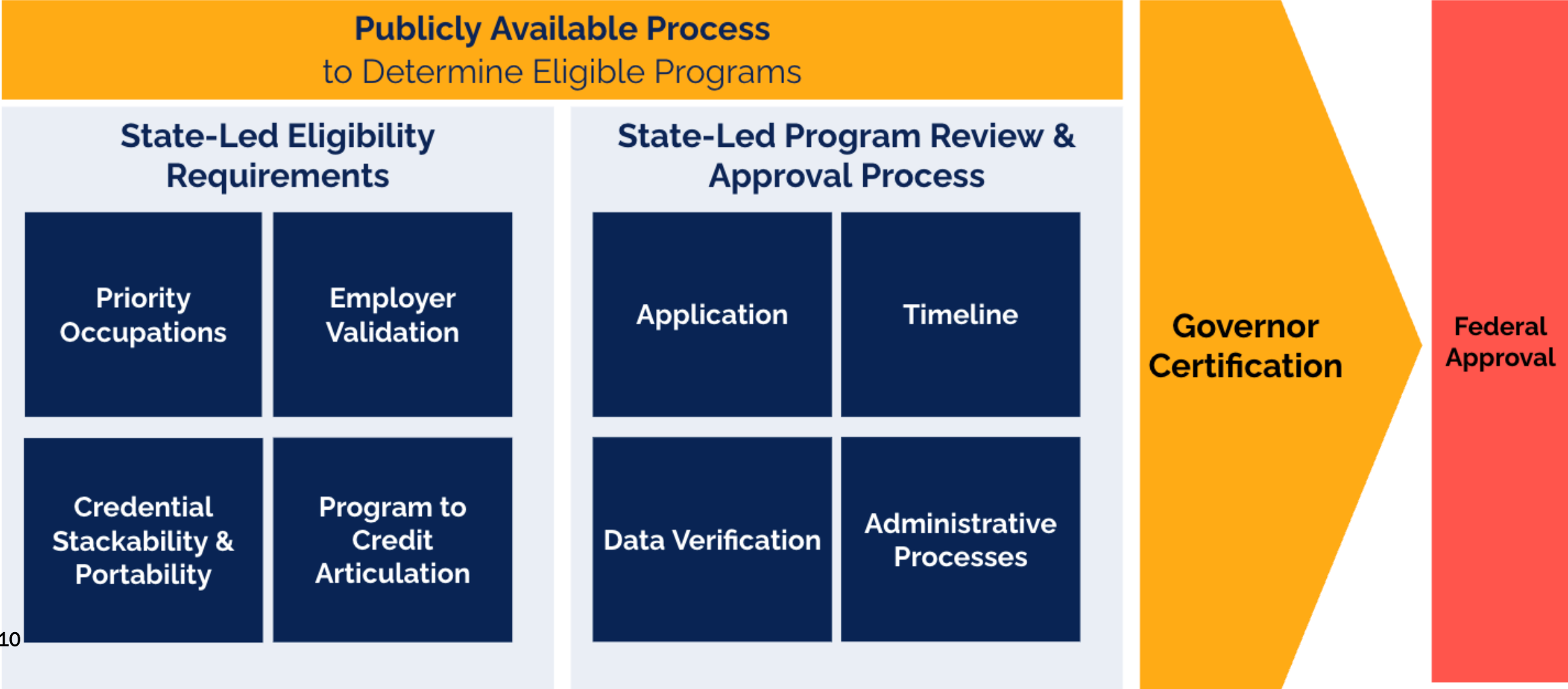
State MAP Grant for Short-Term Certificates

- Effective with the 2022-23 award year
- Enrolled in an Occupational or Career and Technical Certificate Program for at least 3 credit hours
- Need-based, with same student eligibility criteria as traditional MAP Grant,
- Restricted to undergraduate students who have not received a baccalaureate degree

- Applied to tuition and fees only
- Eligibility at Illinois public institutions only

There will be students in short-term workforce programs who are eligible for both a Pell Grant and a MAP Grant.

Background: Regulatory Overview



Cross-Agency Planning and Implementation Structure



Illinois has established a two-tier governance model to coordinate policy alignment and operational execution across relevant state agencies. This structure is meant to ensure accountability, clear decision-making, and momentum toward a successful launch.

Cross-Agency Leadership Team

Sets strategic direction and formalizes policy decisions at the executive level, with representation from Agency Directors and the Governor's Office.

Interagency Steering Committee

Drives day-to-day coordination and operational planning, facilitated by the Education Strategy Group, with subject matter experts from each agency.

Agency Roles and Responsibilities

Each agency plays a distinct and critical role in Illinois' Workforce Pell implementation. Policy support is provided by Education Strategy Group.



Governor's Office

Provides strategic leadership to the interagency teams. Accountable for implementation and approval in alignment with the statute. Consults with the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board on program approval.



ISAC – Financial Aid Alignment

Stays informed on policy development. Contributes to alignment between Workforce Pell and state aid. Helping connect financial aid administrators and counselors to implementation process and to final policies.



IDES & DCEO – Labor Market & Workforce Alignment

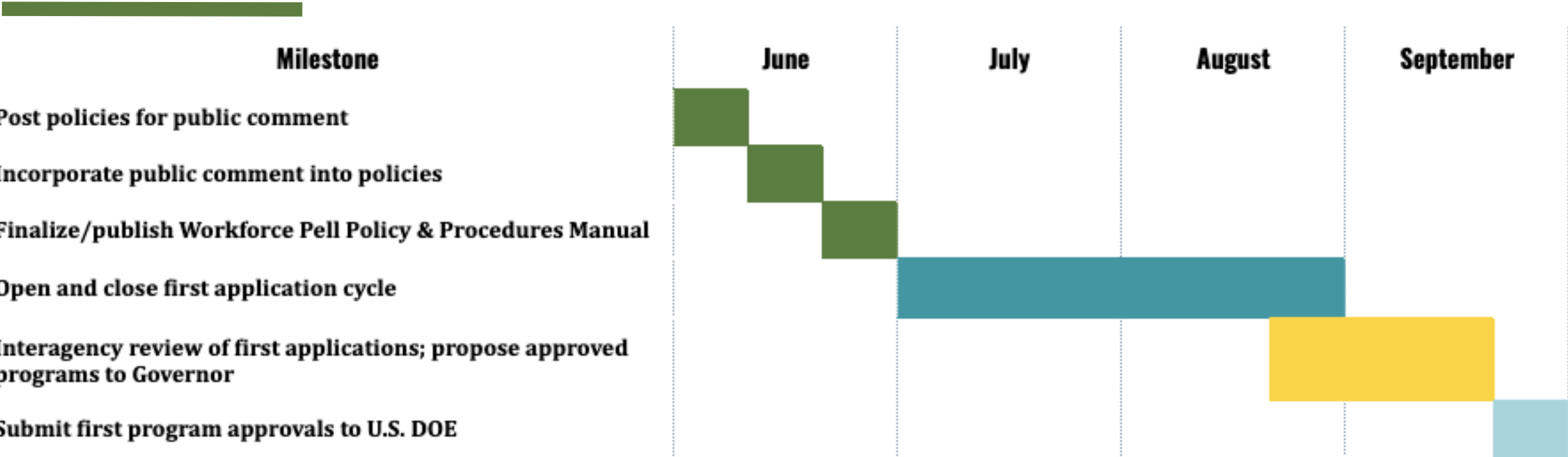
Responsible for employer engagement, labor market data validation, and priority occupation methodology. Contributes to alignment between funded programs and existing workforce training funds.



ICCB & IBHE – Policy and Process Development

ICCB serves as the primary coordinating body. Higher education agencies are responsible for eligibility criteria development, institutional guidance and supports quality standards for short-term credential programs.

Illinois Implementation Timeline





Policy Recommendations

Preview

*Full language will be released for public
comment [anticipated early June]*

Policy Requirements & Proposals (Summary)

Policy Category	Illinois Policy <u>Proposal</u>	Acceptable Documentation
Program meets the hiring requirements of employers (Employer Validation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program is in high-demand. Program competencies are aligned to the competencies of the occupation(s). Authentic employer engagement. 	Combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job postings data Employer Commitment Letters Advisory Committee Minutes Curriculum Competency Maps
Program is Stackable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credential vertically stacks in a pathway Documented links exist to additional credentials 	curriculum maps, program catalogs, articulation agreements, job descriptions
Program is Portable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credential is recognized by more than one employer beyond the awarding institution or region, OR, Credential is aligned with industry or external quality indicators 	employer verification, competency map, job postings, program accreditation
Program articulates to a certificate or degree program and students are awarded academic credit upon successful completion and subsequent enrollment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mirrors Illinois Articulation Initiative processes Institutions shall maintain written agreements ensuring transferability (within or between institutions) Credit must articulate and be applied to the required competencies (not electives) 	Articulation agreements, competency maps, related policies

Please answer in the chat



1. Who/which office on your campus currently validates demand for an occupation when building/implementing/scaling up programs?
2. Who at your institution currently ensures that competencies of programs align with the competencies of open occupations?
3. How does your institution engage with employers to validate training programs?

Please answer in the chat



On your campus, do students typically get “traditional” financial aid services from the same office as financial assistance for students in workforce programs (WIOA-funded training, paid apprenticeships, state PATH program, etc.)?

- a. Yes, same office
- b. No, different office
- c. Other and/or “It’s complicated.” [*Explanation is welcome!*]

Application

- Providers (institutions) will be required to submit an application package for each program seeking Workforce Pell eligibility.
- Applications will be reviewed by an interagency team and considered for approval by the Governor and Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB).
- Programs that receive state approval must then be approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

Application Components

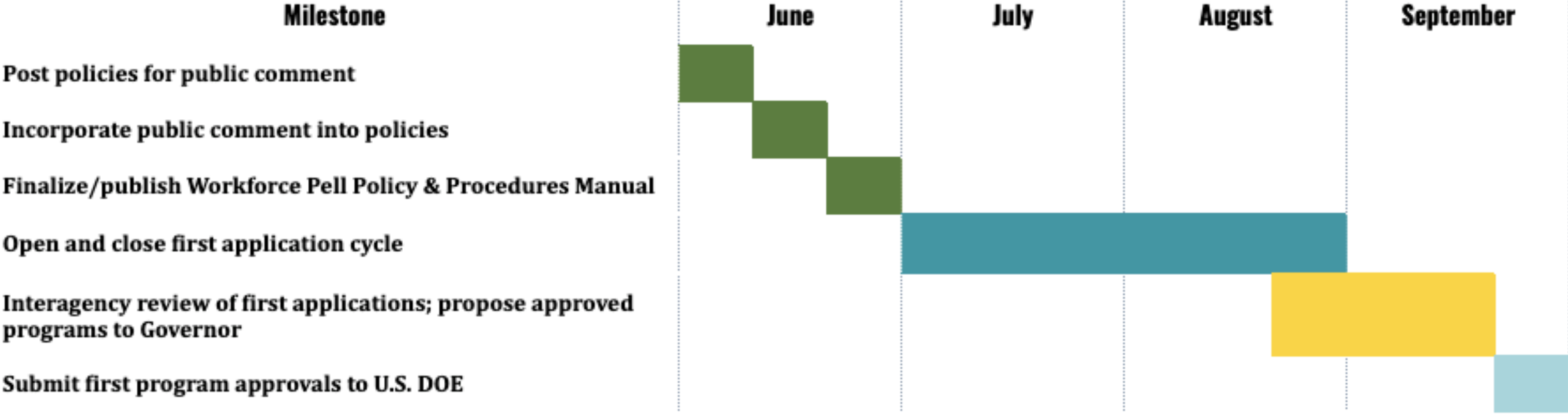


1. Provider Information (Basic Identifying Information, Title IV Compliance, Accreditor)

2. Program Information
 1. Basic information (name, CIP, SOC)
 2. Program has operated for at least 12 months
 3. Program structure (length, number of credits/hours, delivery method)
 4. Tuition and fees
3. Occupational Alignment and Demand
 1. Employer validation (e.g., demonstration of demand)
4. Curriculum
 1. Documentation for stackability, portability, articulation, competency alignment with employer needs
5. Performance and Outcome Data
6. Institutional Attestations

Please answer in the chat

What are the challenges you might face with this timeline?



Please answer in the chat



What support, information, or technical assistance would help you and your institutions to successfully apply for Workforce Pell eligibility?

Looking Ahead: Illinois' Path to Launch

Next Steps

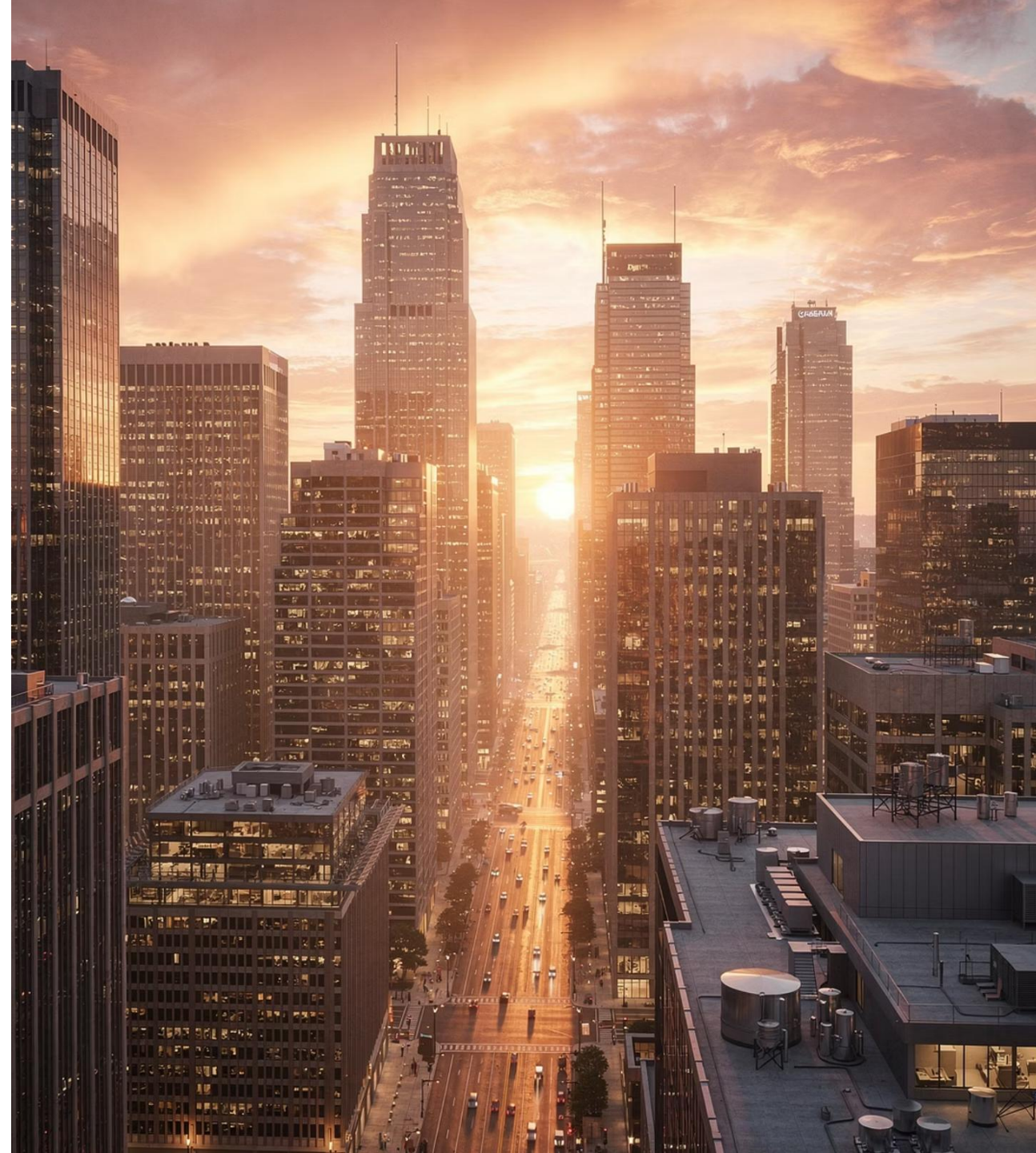
Finalize program eligibility criteria, complete institutional guidance, and begin college-level program review and approval processes in preparation for student enrollment.

Key Success Factors

Sustained cross-agency coordination, strong college readiness, and continued employer engagement will be critical to a successful and equitable launch.

Our Commitment

Every decision will be guided by Illinois' core goal: maximizing student access to high-quality programs and financial aid — with the consumer protections students deserve.



Upcoming events



JUNE:

- Policies to be shared for public comment
- Final policies to be published

JULY:

- Application release and technical assistance webinar

Questions?



Visit the Workforce Pell hub to

- view FAQs
- submit a question or comment

<https://www.iccb.org/programs-and-initiatives/workforce-pell/>

Resources



[Illinois Workforce Pell Implementation Landing Page \(iccb.org/programs-and-initiatives/workforce-pell/\)](https://iccb.org/programs-and-initiatives/workforce-pell/)

- Inquiry Form - ask a question, provide feedback
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Presentations and Recordings

National Guidance

- Federal Student Aid (FSA) has provided, and has continued to update, this [guidance about FAFSA processing updates](https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/electronic-announcements/2026-03-09/one-big-beautiful-bill-act-fafsa-processing-updates-updated-april-23-2026) coming out of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, of which Workforce Pell is a part. (<https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/electronic-announcements/2026-03-09/one-big-beautiful-bill-act-fafsa-processing-updates-updated-april-23-2026>)
- A March 11, 2026, NASFAA post also covered the recent [FAFSA system updates](https://www.nasfaa.org/news-item/38402/ED-Announces-Upcoming-FAFSA-System-Updates-Related-to-OBBBA), including coverage of and reaction to the above-mentioned federal guidance on Workforce Pell implementation. (<https://www.nasfaa.org/news-item/38402/ED-Announces-Upcoming-FAFSA-System-Updates-Related-to-OBBBA>)
- Draft rules are available through the Federal Register and expected to be finalized soon (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/03/09/2026-04520/accountability-in-higher-education-and-access-through-demand-driven-workforce-pell-pell-grant>)