

State Policy Models for Connecting Education to Work Financial Aid for Workforce Development

July 2019

While financial aid programs exist to support enrollment in specific career fields in many states, Education Commission of the States examined only those programs that appeared in state statute and used explicit language that signaled an intent to support workforce development in high-demand fields via postsecondary credential attainment. High-demand fields vary from state to state, but there is often a common thread in classifying high-demand fields; they contain language about workforce shortages or state-identified labor priorities.

This 50-State Comparison includes only programs that made clear that the recipient of funds would be a student, rather than a postsecondary institution or employer. Further, only programs that provided funds that the student would not be required to pay back are included in this list. Many additional financial incentives are available to support workforce development, such as those that may elect to pass funds through a postsecondary institution to a student or those that offer to pay back loans based on an individual's employment in a high-demand field. For the purposes of this 50-State Comparison, Education Commission of the States did not review those types of programs.

STATE ▲	DOES STATE STATUTE DEFINE AT LEAST ONE FINANCIAL AID PROGRAM FOR INDIVIDUALS PURSUING A POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL THAT IS CONNECTED TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS?	FINANCIAL AID CITATION
Alabama	No program found that met criteria.	None
Alaska	No program found that met criteria.	None
Arizona	No program found that met criteria.	None

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Arkansas	<p>Yes, the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship. The program funds scholarships for students enrolled in higher education programs that will lead to the students being qualified to work in high-needs occupations (including a job in industry, health care, information technology, or a program of study or certificate program identified by the Department of Workforce Services).</p> <p>The Arkansas Future Grant Program. A student is eligible for this grant if the student "is enrolled part-time or full-time at an approved institution of higher education in a program of study that leads to an associate degree or a certification in a" STEM field or "regional high-demand field." The revised bill allows candidates who are enrolled in accounting, finance, nursing, education, information technology, data analysis, graphic design, or a state high-demand field.</p>	A.C.A. § 6-85-301 & A.C.A. § 6-82-1802
California	Yes. The Cal C Grant. The commission shall give priority in granting Cal Grant C awards to students pursuing occupational or technical training in areas that meet two of the following criteria pertaining to job quality: (i) High employer need or demand for the specific skills offered in the program; (ii) High employment growth in the occupational field or industry cluster for which the student is being trained; (iii) High employment salary and wage projections for workers employed in the occupations for which they are being trained; (iv) The occupation or training program is part of a well-articulated career pathway to a job providing economic security.	West's Ann.Cal.Educ.Code § 69439
Colorado	Yes. The Workforce Development Program. The program, also known as "Bright Future Colorado," allows any county to establish such a program that provides financial assistance to county residents who pursue postsecondary education or training from an accredited institution of higher education or certified training program.	C.R.S.A. § 30-11-126
Connecticut	Yes. The Information Technology Scholarship Pilot Program which provides grants for students entering or enrolling in an information technology related degree or certification program at any public or independent institution of higher education in the state.	C.G.S.A. § 10a-169a
Delaware	No program found that met criteria.	None
District of Columbia	No program found that met criteria.	None
Florida	No program found that met criteria.	None
Georgia	No program found that met criteria.	None

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Hawaii	Yes. The Workforce Development Scholarship Program. There is established the workforce development scholarship program to be administered by the University of Hawaii to address projected shortfalls in and needs of the workforce. The program shall be used to provide financial assistance for up to three years to any qualified student enrolled at a community college campus of the University of Hawaii.	HRS § 304A-505
Idaho	No program found that met criteria.	None
Illinois	Yes. The Monetary Award Program. The General Assembly finds and declares that it is an important purpose of the Monetary Award Program to facilitate access to college both for students who pursue postsecondary education immediately following high school and for those who pursue postsecondary education later in life, particularly Illinoisans who are dislocated workers with financial need and who are seeking to improve their economic position through education.	110 ILCS 947/35
Indiana	Yes. The High Value Workforce Ready Credit-Bearing Grant. An applicant is eligible to receive a high value workforce ready credit-bearing grant if the applicant is domiciled in Indiana, has completed high school or an equivalency, is enrolled in an eligible certificate program at Ivy Tech College or Vincennes University, enrolls at least half-time, is not eligible for other state financial aid, has filed a FAFSA and is classified as independent, has not already received a bachelor's degree, associate's degree, or eligible certificate, as well as any additional eligibility criteria adopted by the Commission on Higher Education.	Indiana IC 21-12-8-9 & 21-12-8-12
Iowa	Yes. There are three. 1. The Future Ready Iowa Skilled Workforce Last-Dollar Scholarship Program. The program of study or an academic major will lead to a credential aligned with a high-demand job designed by the workforce development board or community college. 2. The Future Ready Iowa Skilled Workforce Grant Program. Eligible students are required to meet requirements, including have earned at least half of the credits necessary for a bachelor's degree in an eligible program of study or academic major leading to a designated high-demand job in the prescribed grant time frame. 3. The Skilled Workforce Shortage Tuition Grant Program. Grants will be awarded only to students pursuing a career-technical or career option program in an industry identified as having a shortage of skilled workers by a community college after conducting a regional skills gap analysis.	I.C.A. § 261.131 & I.C.A. § 261.132 & I.C.A. § 261.130
Kansas	Yes. The Career Technical Workforce Grant, which would be available to eligible students who enrolled in or have been accepted for admission to an eligible career technical education program that offers a program characterized by high cost, high demand or in a critical industry field program, operated by a designated Kansas educational institution.	K.S.A. 74-32,423

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Kentucky	Yes. The Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship, which can be used by an eligible student in a qualified workforce training program (a program that is in one of KY's top five high-demand work sectors as determined by the KY Workforce Investment Board. 2. The Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship Program. Includes an eligible program of study, which means a program approved by the authority that leads to an industry-recognized certificate, diploma, or associate of applied science in one of KY's top five high-demand workforce sectors identified by the KY Workforce Innovation Board and the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet.	KRS § 164.7884
Louisiana	Yes. The TOPS-Tech Award. A student who is eligible for a TOPS-Tech Award pursuant to this Chapter and who is enrolled in an eligible public college or university that does not offer an academic undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level in those associate's degree or other shorter-term training and education programs that are aligned to state workforce priorities as determined by the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council, shall be awarded by the state an amount determined by the administering agency to equal the tuition charged by the college or university during the 2016-2017 academic year.	LSA-R.S. 17:5002
Maine	Yes. The Competitive Skills Scholarship Program. The department shall establish and administer an employment training program known as the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program. The purpose of the program is to provide individuals with access to education, training and support leading to skilled, well-compensated jobs with anticipated high employment demand, to improve the economic well-being of the participants in the program and to provide employers with a skilled labor force.	26 M.R.S.A. § 2033
Maryland	Yes, the Workforce Shortage Student Assistance Grant Program. There is a program of Workforce Shortage Student Assistance grants under this section for students who pledge to work in fields of critical shortage in the State on completion of their studies.	MD Code, Education, § 18-708
Massachusetts	Yes. The Educational Rewards Grant Program Fund. The fund shall provide, without further appropriation, grants to students in accredited post-secondary certificate or vocational technology programs or associate degree programs in targeted high-demand occupations.	M.G.L.A. 29 § 2SSS
Michigan	Yes. The Michigan talent pledge scholarship program. Grants to districts for stipends for students and bonus payments to districts that are parties to a talent consortium and whose students successfully earn an in-demand workforce certificate in a high-demand field.	M.C.L.A. 388.1897c

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Minnesota	Yes. Workforce Development Scholarships - a scholarship program to incentivize new students to enter high-demand occupations upon graduation. Scholarships shall be awarded only to a student eligible for resident tuition who is enrolled in any of the following programs of study or certification: (1) advanced manufacturing; (2) agriculture; (3) health care services; (4) information technology; (5) early childhood; or (6) transportation.	M.S.A. § 136F.38
Mississippi	No program found that met criteria.	None
Missouri	Yes. The Fast-Track Workforce Incentive Grant. Provides funds to students to attend a postsecondary institution of their choice, after meeting certain income eligibility criteria. The program is available to students who are at least 25 years of age. Eligible programs of study are to be determined by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education in connection with local education institutions, regional business organizations, and other stakeholders. The board must review and update the list of eligible programs on an annual basis. The award to the student is equal to actual tuition and fees charged after all other sources of federal and state aid are applied. If other aid reduces a student's balance to zero, then the grant still provides to the student an award of up to \$500, or the remaining cost of attendance, whichever amount is less.	2019 Missouri Senate Bill 68
Montana	Yes. There are three. 1. The Montana Promise Grant Program. If the amount of funding is not sufficient to provide grants to all eligible students, the board of regents may adopt policies for the prioritization of grants based on the following criteria in order: (a) previous participation in the grant program, (b) financial aid, (c) students in programs for professional credentialing in high-demand labor markets, ... 2. The Montana STEM scholarship program. The purpose of the program is to provide an incentive for MT high school students to prepare for, enter into, and complete degrees in postsecondary fields related to STEM and health care, with the goals of increasing the number of STEM degree recipients in MT's workforce and satisfying current and anticipated economic and workforce development needs in MT. 3. Governor's postsecondary scholarship program. The purpose of the governor's postsecondary scholarship program is to provide scholarships on the basis of need and merit to Montana residents toward the cost of attendance at 2-year and 4-year postsecondary institutions and to allocate some of the scholarships to specific areas of study that promote economic development or address critical workforce shortage areas in Montana.	MCA 20-26-623 & MCA 20-26-614 & MCA 20-26-602

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Nebraska	Yes. The Community college gap assistance program. The purpose of the community college gap assistance program is to provide funding to community colleges to award community college gap assistance to students in eligible programs. Eligible program means a program offered by a community college that (a) either (i) is not offered for credit and has a duration of not less than sixteen contact hours in length or (ii) is offered for credit but is of insufficient clock, semester, or quarter hours to be eligible for Federal Pell Grants, (b) but is aligned with training programs with stackable credentials that lead to a program awarding college credit, an associate's degree, a diploma, or a certificate in an in-demand occupation.	Neb.Rev.St. § 85-2003
Nevada	No program found that met criteria.	None
New Hampshire	No program found that met criteria.	None
New Jersey	No program found that met criteria.	None
New Mexico	No program found that met criteria.	None
New York	No program found that met criteria.	None
North Carolina	Yes. The Forgivable Loans for Service Program. There is established the Forgivable Education Loans for Service Fund to be administered by the Authority. The purpose of the Fund is to provide financial assistance to qualified students to enable them to obtain the requisite education beyond the high school level to work in North Carolina in certain high-need professions as identified by the General Assembly and to respond to current as well as future employment shortages in North Carolina.	N.C.G.S.A. § 116-209.45
North Dakota	Yes. The Skilled Workforce Scholarship Fund. Eligibility is based on a student pursuing a high demand field program, maintaining a 2.5 GPA, working in a high demand field post graduation, and residing in the state for three years after completing the program. If a student fails to meet these requirements, they must pay back the scholarship.	NDCC, 15-10-65
Ohio	Yes. The OhioMeansJobs workforce development revolving fund awards. The chancellor shall give preference to certificate programs that support adult learners and are included in the inventory.	R.C. § 3333.94
Oklahoma	No program found that met criteria.	None

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Oregon	No program found that met criteria.	None
Pennsylvania	No program found that met criteria.	None
Puerto Rico	No program found that met criteria.	None
Rhode Island	No program found that met criteria.	None
South Carolina	No program found that met criteria.	None
South Dakota	No program found that met criteria.	None
Tennessee	No program found that met criteria.	None
Texas	No program found that met criteria.	None
Utah	<p>Yes. There are five. 1. The Talent Development Incentive Loan Program. The program was created to recruit and train individuals in certain jobs that have a high demand for new employees and offer high wages. 2. The Career and Technical Education Scholarships. An eligible institution may award a scholarship to an individual who is enrolled in, or intends to enroll in, a high demand program. 3. The Rural Online Initiative Pilot Program. The program will, among other things, provide scholarships for individuals who live in rural areas to access online skill-based training for remote online opportunities. 4. The Pilot Program of Competency-Based Career and Technical Education Grants. As a condition of participating in a qualifying education program under this section, an individual shall, among other things, work with a financial aid officer for a qualifying education program and pay the tuition for the competency-based career and technical education charged by the certificate program provider. 5. Technical College Scholarships. The board of trustees of technical colleges are required to award these scholarships. They are allowed to award a scholarship to an individual who, among other things: is enrolled in, or intends to enroll in, a high demand program.</p>	<p>U.C.A. 1953 § 53B-10-202 & U.C.A. 1953 § 53B-8-114 & U.C.A. 1953 § 53B-18-1501 & U.C.A. 1953 § 63M-7-210 & U.C.A. 1953 § 53B-2a-116</p>
Vermont	No program found that met criteria.	None
Virginia	<p>Yes. The New Economy Workforce Credential Grant Program. Any eligible student who enrolls in a noncredit workforce training program offered by an eligible institution may apply for and be awarded a grant to cover two-thirds of the cost of the noncredit workforce training program.</p>	<p>VA Code Ann. § 23.1-627.4</p>

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Washington	Yes. The Opportunity Grant Program. The college board is required to develop and implement a workforce education program known as the opportunity grant program to provide financial and other assistance for students enrolled at qualified institutions of higher education in opportunity grant-eligible programs of study. Under the program, the college board, in partnership with business, labor, and the workforce training and education coordinating council is required to, among other things, to identify high employer demand programs of study offered by qualified postsecondary institutions that lead to a credential, certificate, or degree...	West's RCWA 28B.50.271 through 273 &
West Virginia	No program found that met criteria.	None
Wisconsin	No program found that met criteria.	None
Wyoming	Yes. The Wyoming Works Program through the community colleges system. The program will provide grants to students and community college programs that meet labor and economic development needs. The grants to students are to support them in pursuing credential through the community college system.	W.S.1977 § 21-18-404