



State of Tennessee State Workforce Development Board Special-Called Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 23, 2026, via Webex - 3:01 PM to 3:31 PM

Board Members Present

- Natalie Alvarez
- Martha Axford
- Assistant Commissioner Jay Baker
- Joe Baker
- Jason Bates
- Tim Berry
- Lynda Botsch (Southern Middle)
- Joey Barnett for State Representative Clark Boyd*
- Josh Brown*
- Assistant Commissioner Suzanne Carr
- Designee: Senior Policy Advisor Shannon Rosedale for Commissioner Clarence Carter
- Billy Dycus
- Max Goldberg
- Marshall Graves (Southeast)
- J. Paul Jackson
- David Jordan*
- Sandra Long*
- Kelly North
- Stuart Price*
- Designee: Assistant Commissioner Deborah Knoll for Commissioner Lizzette Reynolds
- Lee Sloan*
- David Stansell
- Commissioner Deniece Thomas
- Will Trumm*
- Jeff Vance

Board Members Present by Proxy

- Ben Ferguson (Southwest) – Marshall Graves, Proxy
- Mayor Tim Kelly – Charita Allen, Proxy
- Ron Wade (Greater Memphis) – Stoney Ramsey, Proxy

Board Members Absent

- Jacky Akbari
- Brandy Lassiter for State Senator Paul Bailey
- Policy Director Michael Hendrix for Governor Bill Lee
- Designee: Director Jennie McCabe for Commissioner Stuart McWhorter
- Mayor Mike Pogreba (Northern Middle)

Location in parenthesis represents the state board member's membership on a local workforce board.

*Arrived after roll call

Welcome

Chairman Berry called the Special Called Meeting to order at 3:01 PM. He explained that this meeting was convened outside the Board's normal schedule solely because the federal timelines for action on the Workforce Pell Grant Framework Policy fell between regularly scheduled meetings.

Chairman Berry also outlined virtual meeting procedures, including:

- Board member participation through the virtual platform
- Public comment procedures
- Confirmation that Workforce Pell would be the only item of business

Roll Call

Iler Bradley conducted the roll call and established the presence of a quorum.

Workforce Pell Grant Framework Policy

Buddy Hoskinson, Deputy Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD)

Jay Baker, Assistant Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD)

Overview

Deputy Commissioner Buddy Hoskinson provided background regarding Workforce Pell, explaining:

- The "One Big Beautiful Bill" amended the Higher Education Act of 1965.
- The legislation expanded the federal Pell Grant program to include short-term workforce training.
- Final federal regulations were issued in May 2026.
- Before starting this grant program on July 1, there must be an approved policy.

He noted that the board received informational materials regarding Workforce Pell earlier in the year.

Presentation

Assistant Commissioner Jay Baker presented the proposed Tennessee Workforce Pell Grant Framework Policy. He discussed the purpose, eligibility requirements, policy development, and board responsibilities.

Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to expand Pell grants traditionally associated with bachelor's and associate degrees to support:

- Short-term workforce training for non-graduate students
- High-demand occupations and high-wage jobs
- Industry-recognized credentials

State approval from the State Workforce Development Board is required, followed by final approval from the U.S. Department of Education.

Eligibility Requirements

The proposed policy established eligibility requirements for participating programs.

- The program institutions must:
 - already be Title IV eligible, i.e. able to administer Pell grants and federal financial aid
 - receive Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) authorization
- Programs must:
 - generally range from 8–14 weeks in duration
 - prepare students for high-demand, high-still, high wage occupations
 - result portable and stackable credentials
 - have employer validation
 - include credit pathways into additional postsecondary education
 - achieve a minimum 70% completion rate and a minimum 70% job placement rate
- Program costs must be reasonable relative to expected wages.

Policy Development

Mr. Baker highlighted the extensive collaboration involved in developing the framework, including:

- Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC)
- Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR)
- SCORE
- Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development
- Education and Training Working Group

Mr. Baker noted the policy closely followed federal statutory and regulatory requirements while preserving flexibility through future operational guidance. He gave a quick summary statement on each of the fourteen policy sections.

Board Responsibilities

If the policy is approved, the State Workforce Development Board will have ongoing responsibilities, including:

- Reviewing Workforce Pell program applications submitted by eligible institutions
- Receiving recommendations from Department of Labor and THEC staff
- Approving or denying Workforce Pell eligibility for individual programs

Following the board's decisions, state staff will notify the applying institutions and provide technical assistance as needed. Mr. Baker noted that relatively few programs are expected to qualify immediately, with CDL training cited as one likely early applicant.

Board Action

Chairman Berry called for a motion to approve the Tennessee Workforce Pell Grant Framework Policy as presented. It was moved by Jason Bates and seconded by Marshall Graves. Following discussion, it was noted that there was no

public comment. A roll-call vote was taken and the motion passed [28 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, and 5 absences].

Closing Remarks

Chairman Barry thanked Board members and Department staff for participating in the Special Called Meeting. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:31 PM.

Audio Recording

An audio recording of this meeting is on file at the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Meeting Minutes

These minutes were signed August 28, 2026, by Tim Berry, Chairman of the State Workforce Development Board.

The signed document is available for inspection upon request.

All meeting minutes and dates are provided on the State Workforce Development Board website.