Budget Narrative

Lead Applicant: Northwest Mississippi Community College (NWCC)

Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways Initiative | SCC6 FOA-ETA-26-40

This budget narrative describes how funds requested by Northwest Mississippi Community College (NWCC), the lead applicant and fiscal agent for the *Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways Initiative*, will support implementation of the 48-month Strengthening Community Colleges Round 6 project. Proposed costs are necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the project and are aligned with the project narrative, work plan, organizational chart, staffing plan, and the SCC6 focus on Workforce Pell implementation, employer engagement, career pathways, workforce system integration, and statewide education-to-employment data capacity.

Cost Center	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Personnel	$160,000	$164,800	$169,744	$174,836	$669,380
Fringe	$57,600	$59,328	$61,108	$62,941	$240,977
Travel	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Equipment	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Supplies	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Contractual/Subawards	$4,722,050	$1,188,141	$599,761	$599,761	$7,109,713
Other Direct Costs	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Indirect Costs	$225,040	$107,651	$96,341	$95,111	$524,143
Total	$5,164,690	$1,519,920	$926,953	$932,649	$8,544,213

I. PERSONNEL

Personnel costs support statewide project management, fiscal oversight, compliance, performance reporting, data coordination, grant documentation, and implementation oversight necessary to administer the SCC6 project. Personnel salaries include a 3% annual cost-of-living adjustment in Years 2-4.

Personnel Salaries	Level of Effort	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Project Director	100% FTE	$80,000	$82,400	$84,872	$87,418	$334,690
Data and Performance Manager	100% FTE	$65,000	$66,950	$68,958	$71,027	$271,936
Grants Accounting and Compliance Manager	20% FTE	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Grant Writer Coordinator	5% FTE	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Total Personnel		$160,000	$164,800	$169,744	$174,836	$669,380

A. Project Director - TBD

Level of Effort: 100% FTE

Annual Salary Basis: $80,000 in Year 1; $82,400 in Year 2; $84,872 in Year 3; and $87,418 in Year 4.

Project Responsibilities: The Project Director will be responsible for overall administration and management of the SCC6 project. Responsibilities include overseeing implementation of all grant activities; coordinating consortium operations; managing relationships among consortium colleges, AccelerateMS, MCCB, MDES, NSPARC, MSBA/Workforce Institute, employers, and other partners; ensuring compliance with federal grant requirements; supervising project staff and contractors; monitoring progress toward project outcomes and deliverables; supporting statewide Workforce Pell implementation and governance activities; coordinating subrecipient and contract oversight; and serving as the primary point of contact with the U.S. Department of Labor.

B. Data and Performance Manager - TBD

Level of Effort: 100% FTE

Annual Salary Basis: $65,000 in Year 1; $66,950 in Year 2; $68,958 in Year 3; and $71,027 in Year 4.

Project Responsibilities: The Data and Performance Manager will support project-level data coordination, institutional reporting support, dashboard/data system support, data validation, performance reporting, and data quality assurance. Responsibilities include assisting consortium institutions with standardized reporting processes; supporting data collection and reporting protocols; coordinating required federal performance data; validating institutional submissions; supporting dashboard development and performance monitoring; coordinating with contractors and state partners supporting statewide data integration; and assisting with DOL reporting requirements associated with Workforce Pell implementation.

C. Grants Accounting and Compliance Manager - Existing Staff

Level of Effort: 20% FTE

Annual Salary Basis: [redacted]

Project Responsibilities: The Grants Accounting and Compliance Manager will support fiscal oversight and compliance activities associated with the SCC6 grant. Responsibilities include financial monitoring; invoice review; subrecipient fiscal monitoring; budget tracking; drawdown coordination; procurement and contract compliance support; documentation review; and coordination of audit, recordkeeping, and financial reporting requirements. This position will help ensure that expenditures comply with Uniform Guidance, institutional policies, and SCC6 award requirements.

D. Grant Writer Coordinator - Existing Staff

Level of Effort: 5% FTE

Annual Salary Basis: [redacted]

Project Responsibilities: The Grant Writer Coordinator will support grant administration, reporting coordination, narrative development, and documentation activities associated with SCC6 implementation. Responsibilities include assisting with required federal reports, supporting grant documentation and compliance activities, coordinating submission timelines, and assisting project leadership with federal communication and reporting deliverables.

II. FRINGE BENEFITS

Fringe benefits are calculated at 36% of salary costs, consistent with NWCC institutional practice. Fringe benefit costs include standard employer-paid benefits and related payroll expenses such as FICA, retirement, health insurance, workers compensation, unemployment insurance, and other allowable employee benefits associated with grant-funded personnel.

Fringe Costs	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Project Director	$28,800	$29,664	$30,554	$31,471	$120,488
Data and Performance Manager	$23,400	$24,102	$24,825	$25,570	$97,897
Grants Accounting and Compliance Manager	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Grant Writer Coordinator	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Total Fringe	$57,600	$59,328	$61,108	$62,941	$240,977

III. TRAVEL

No direct travel funds are requested under the NWCC lead applicant budget. NWCC will utilize virtual coordination, remote technical assistance, and technology-supported meetings to reduce administrative costs and maximize resources for statewide implementation, systems integration, and Workforce Pell capacity-building activities. Travel necessary for contractor performance will be included, as applicable, within individual contract scopes and pricing rather than budgeted as a separate NWCC travel line item.

IV. EQUIPMENT

No equipment costs are requested under the NWCC lead applicant budget. Limited equipment or technology upgrade needs for participating community colleges will be addressed through the Implementation Fund and related implementation activities budgeted under the AccelerateMS subaward, as appropriate and allowable.

V. SUPPLIES

No supplies are requested under the NWCC lead applicant budget.

VI. CONTRACTS / SUBAWARDS

NWCC will use subawards and contracts to support statewide implementation, employer engagement, workforce system integration, data system modernization, secure data linkage, developmental evaluation, and technical assistance. Subawards are budgeted for programmatic partners carrying out a portion of the federal award, while contracts are budgeted for vendors or service providers delivering specific services or technical expertise to NWCC and the consortium.

Contracts/Subawards	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
AccelerateMS - Subaward	$4,027,050	$693,141	$154,761	$154,761	$5,029,713
Technical Coordinator - Contract	$100,000	$100,000	$50,000	$50,000	$300,000
MSBA/Workforce Institute - Contract	$50,000	$50,000	$50,000	$50,000	$200,000
MDES - Workforce System Integration Contract	$20,000	$20,000	$20,000	$20,000	$80,000

MCCB - Subaward	$150,000	$100,000	$100,000	$100,000	$450,000
NSPARC Secure Research Enclave - Contract	$250,000	$100,000	$100,000	$100,000	$550,000
External Third-Party Evaluator - Contract	$100,000	$100,000	$100,000	$100,000	$400,000
Technical Assistance Grant Management/Data Assistance - Contract	$25,000	$25,000	$25,000	$25,000	$100,000
Total Contracts/Subawards	$4,722,050	$1,188,141	$599,761	$599,761	$7,109,713

A. AccelerateMS – Subaward $5,029,713

Funds are requested for a subaward to AccelerateMS to support statewide Workforce Pell coordination, governance, implementation oversight, employer and workforce alignment, and consortium-wide implementation activities. AccelerateMS will support statewide coordination of the project; align activities with Mississippi workforce priorities; support Workforce Pell governance and implementation processes; coordinate with state-level workforce, education, and employer partners; and administer implementation resources that support participating community colleges in preparing systems and programs for Workforce Pell eligibility and reporting. A separate subaward budget and budget narrative will describe AccelerateMS activities in greater detail.

B. Technical Coordinator – Contract $300,000

Funds are requested to procure a Technical Coordinator through a competitive procurement process. The Technical Coordinator will provide consortium-wide implementation support related to Workforce Pell operationalization, student information system (SIS) modifications, institutional systems implementation, and technical assistance to participating community colleges. Responsibilities will include assisting colleges with implementation planning; coordinating technical assistance related to SIS upgrades and system changes; supporting integration of non-credit workforce programs into institutional reporting and tracking systems; assisting with implementation troubleshooting; coordinating systems alignment across institutions; and facilitating communication among college technical staff, MCCB, AccelerateMS, NWCC, and other project partners. No software or platform costs are budgeted under this contract; those costs are included in the Technical System Upgrade Fund under the AccelerateMS subaward.

C. Mississippi Business Alliance / Workforce Institute - Employer and Industry Engagement Contract $200,000

Funds are requested for a contract with the Mississippi Business Alliance (MSBA) / Workforce Institute to support statewide employer engagement and industry coordination aligned with SCC6 Core Element 1. MSBA/Workforce Institute will support statewide employer engagement infrastructure; coordinate sector-based industry convenings and regional roundtables; facilitate employer validation of skills, competencies, and credentials; support employer feedback collection; assist with mapping employer hiring requirements to Workforce Pell-aligned programs; support talent marketplace alignment; and strengthen employer-informed program design across targeted sectors. This work will help ensure Workforce Pell-eligible programs are aligned with employer demand and support sustained employer engagement beyond the grant period.

D. Mississippi Department of Employment Security - Workforce System Integration Contract $80,000

Funds are requested for a contractual arrangement with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) to support workforce system integration activities aligned with SCC6 Core Element 3. Although MDES has an existing interagency MOU with AccelerateMS, this budget supports a direct contractual relationship between NWCC and MDES for SCC6-specific services. MDES will support alignment between Workforce Pell implementation and Mississippi workforce system infrastructure; assist with ETPL and WIOA alignment; support workforce system coordination; assist with employment and wage outcome validation, as appropriate; and help ensure Workforce Pell-aligned programs are integrated with statewide workforce services and training options.

E. Mississippi Community College Board – Subaward $450,000

Funds are requested for a subaward to the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB) to support statewide data systems modernization, community college system alignment, and implementation activities necessary to support Workforce Pell eligibility and reporting. MCCB will support updates to community college data systems, reporting processes, and statewide coordination needed to capture non-credit workforce participants, credentials, program completion, and other data elements necessary for Workforce Pell implementation. A separate subaward budget and budget narrative will describe MCCB activities in greater detail.

F. NSPARC - Secure Research Enclave/Data Integration Contract $550,000

Funds are requested for a contract with the National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research Center (NSPARC) to support secure data linkage and statewide education-to-employment data integration activities. NSPARC will support development and implementation of secure data-sharing infrastructure; assist with linkage of workforce and education data systems; develop secure research enclave capabilities; assist with workforce and education outcome matching; and support longitudinal data coordination aligned with Workforce Pell reporting and accountability requirements.

G. External Third-Party Evaluator – Contract $400,000

Funds are requested to procure an independent external third-party evaluator through a competitive procurement process. The evaluator will conduct a developmental evaluation designed to support continuous improvement throughout the grant period. Evaluation activities will include implementation assessment, outcome analysis, identification of implementation challenges and opportunities, review of progress toward stated objectives, and development of recommendations to strengthen project effectiveness and sustainability. Evaluation costs are budgeted at $400,000 over the 48-month project period and will remain within the SCC6 limitation of no more than 5% of the total grant award.

H. Technical Assistance Grant Management / Data Assistance – Contract $100,000

Funds are requested for technical assistance and data support services to strengthen NWCC lead applicant responsibilities for grant implementation, reporting coordination, and data management infrastructure. This contractor will assist NWCC with DOL reporting strategy, grant management support, institutional data collection processes, reporting infrastructure, data coordination, performance reporting alignment, and technical assistance related to grant-funded data management responsibilities. This contract supplements, but does not duplicate, the Data and Performance Manager position by

providing specialized technical assistance and additional capacity for complex federal reporting and statewide data management coordination.

VII. CONSTRUCTION

No construction costs are requested. The project does not include construction or renovation costs under the NWCC lead applicant budget.

VIII. OTHER DIRECT COSTS

No other direct costs are requested under the NWCC lead applicant budget. Technical system upgrade funds and implementation funds are included under the AccelerateMS subaward and will be described in the AccelerateMS subaward budget narrative.

IX. INDIRECT COSTS

NWCC will apply its federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) of 40% using the Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) base methodology. Indirect costs are calculated in accordance with NWCC's approved federally negotiated indirect cost agreement and applicable federal regulations. Consistent with MTDC methodology, exclusions include equipment, participant support costs, and the portion of each subaward and subcontract in excess of $50,000, as applicable.

Indirect Cost Calculation	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Personnel	$160,000	$164,800	$169,744	$174,836	$669,380
Fringe	$57,600	$59,328	$61,108	$62,941	$240,977
MTDC-Eligible Portion of Contracts/Subawards	$345,000	$45,000	$10,000	$0	$400,000
MTDC Base	$562,600	$269,128	$240,852	$237,777	$1,310,357
Indirect Costs (40%)	$225,040	$107,651	$96,341	$95,111	$524,143

X. LEVERAGED RESOURCES

NWCC and project partners will leverage existing institutional and statewide resources to support implementation of the proposed project, including existing workforce program administration, fiscal and grants management infrastructure, institutional research capacity, data governance structures, employer engagement relationships, workforce training facilities, student support services, and state-level workforce coordination capacity. These resources will support efficient grant implementation and sustainability beyond the federal period of performance.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

AccelerateMS Subaward

Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants (SCC6)

FOA-ETA-26-40

Total Request: $5,029,713

A. Personnel Total: $308,275

Personnel costs support statewide Workforce Pell implementation coordination, institutional technical assistance, statewide implementation oversight, systems modernization coordination, and project implementation activities aligned with SCC6 Core Elements 1, 2, and 3.

Statewide Workforce Pell Coordinator

1 FTE Year 1: [redacted]

.75 FTE Year 2: [redacted]

.50 FTE Year 3: [redacted]

.50 FTE Year 4: [redacted]

AccelerateMS will support a Statewide Workforce Pell Coordinator to oversee statewide implementation and coordination of Workforce Pell capacity-building activities across participating Mississippi community colleges. Responsibilities include coordinating implementation activities among participating institutions; supporting statewide Workforce Pell operationalization; facilitating coordination among consortium colleges, workforce system partners, and employer partners; assisting colleges with implementation planning and readiness activities; coordinating technical assistance activities; supporting institutional implementation troubleshooting; and assisting with statewide workforce and education systems alignment.

The position is structured to provide intensive statewide implementation support during Years 1 and 2, when the majority of systems modernization and Workforce Pell implementation activities occur, with a gradual reduction in grant-supported effort during Years 3 and 4 as implementation activities transition into ongoing institutional operations and sustainability planning.

B. Fringe Total: $109,438

Fringe benefits are calculated at AccelerateMS's approved fringe benefit rate of 35.5%.

Statewide Workforce Pell Coordinator

Year 1: [redacted]

Year 2: [redacted]

Year 3: [redacted]

Year 4: [redacted]

C. Travel Total: $0

No travel funds are requested under the AccelerateMS subaward budget. Statewide coordination, implementation support, employer engagement, and technical assistance activities will primarily occur through virtual coordination mechanisms or through travel and implementation activities incorporated into contractual support structures and implementation activities funded elsewhere within the SCC6 project budget.

D. Equipment $0

No direct equipment purchases are budgeted under the AccelerateMS subaward budget. However, implementation support activities funded through the Implementation Support Fund may include allowable institutional equipment purchases necessary to support Workforce Pell implementation and approved institutional modernization activities. Any such purchases will comply with all applicable federal, state, institutional, and U.S. Department of Labor procurement and approval requirements.

All equipment purchases supported through these implementation funds will be fully procured, installed, operational, and available for project implementation no later than the end of Year 2 of the grant period.

E. Supplies $0

No supply costs are requested under the AccelerateMS subaward budget.

F. Contractual Total $312,000

Data Management Support Position (Contract)

Year 1: $78,000

Year 2: $78,000

Year 3: $78,000

Year 4: $78,000

AccelerateMS will procure specialized data management support services to assist with statewide Workforce Pell implementation coordination and institutional systems integration activities.

The contracted position will provide approximately 10 hours per week of specialized technical assistance and data support services at a rate of $150 per hour. Responsibilities include supporting statewide implementation coordination; assisting with institutional systems modernization activities; supporting participant-level reporting alignment; assisting with statewide reporting coordination; supporting institutional troubleshooting and implementation assistance; and supporting statewide Workforce Pell operationalization activities.

F. Other Total $4,300,000

Technical System Upgrade Fund Total $3,000,000 (Year 1)

AccelerateMS will administer a Technical System Upgrade Fund to support participating community colleges in modernizing institutional systems necessary for Workforce Pell implementation and statewide participant-level reporting. The fund will support upgrades to student information systems (SIS) and related institutional infrastructure necessary to incorporate Workforce Pell-eligible non-credit programs into institutional reporting, financial aid processing, participant tracking, and statewide workforce and education data systems.

Funding will support implementation activities including, but not limited to:

• SIS modifications and modernization

• Integration of non-credit Workforce Pell program tracking

• Alignment with institutional financial aid systems

• Statewide reporting integration

• Participant-level reporting functionality

• Data system interoperability

All 15 participating community colleges will require some level of systems modernization support to implement Workforce Pell programs and integrate non-credit workforce data into institutional and statewide reporting systems. Institutions will submit implementation plans, scopes of work, timelines, procurement documentation or vendor quotes, and project budgets for review and approval by AccelerateMS prior to release of funds.

AccelerateMS anticipates providing approximately $200,000 per participating community college to support systems modernization and Workforce Pell implementation readiness activities.

Workforce Pell Implementation Support Fund Total $1,300,000

Year 1: $800,000

Year 2: $500,000

AccelerateMS will administer a Workforce Pell Implementation Support Fund to assist participating community colleges with Workforce Pell program development, implementation readiness, program operationalization, and institutional implementation activities associated with Workforce Pell program expansion.

The Implementation Support Fund may include allowable institutional equipment purchases necessary to support Workforce Pell implementation and approved institutional modernization activities. Any such purchases will comply with all applicable federal, state, institutional, and U.S. Department of Labor procurement and approval requirements.

Participating colleges will submit implementation proposals, scopes of work, implementation timelines, procurement documentation or vendor quotes, project budgets, and implementation justifications to AccelerateMS for review and approval prior to release of funds.

Requests will be evaluated based on alignment with Workforce Pell implementation objectives, institutional readiness, implementation feasibility, workforce demand alignment, and consistency with SCC6 project goals and approved implementation activities.

G. Construction

No construction costs are requested under the AccelerateMS subaward budget.

H. Indirect Costs

No indirect costs are requested under the AccelerateMS subaward budget. AccelerateMS is prioritizing direct investment into statewide Workforce Pell implementation activities, institutional systems modernization, statewide coordination, and institutional implementation support activities associated with SCC6 project objectives.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB) Subaward
Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants (SCC6)
FOA-ETA-26-40

Total Request: $450,000

A. Personnel $0

No personnel costs are requested under the MCCB subaward budget. Workforce Programs Data & Accountability Specialists are structured as contractual support positions rather than direct employees.

B. Fringe Benefits $0

No fringe benefits are requested under the MCCB subaward budget because no direct personnel positions are included under this subaward.

C. Travel $0

No travel funds are requested under the MCCB subaward budget. Statewide implementation coordination and institutional technical assistance activities will primarily occur through virtual coordination, institutional implementation support activities, and collaborative coordination with participating colleges and statewide project partners.

D. Equipment $0

No equipment purchases are requested under the MCCB subaward budget.

E. Supplies $0

No supply costs are requested under the MCCB subaward budget.

F. Contractual $450,000

Workforce Programs Data & Accountability Specialists (2 @ $50,000 per year each)
Year 1: $100,000
Year 2: $100,000
Year 3: $100,000
Year 4: $100,000
Total: $400,000

MCCB will utilize **two contractual Workforce Programs Data & Accountability Specialists** to support statewide coordination, planning, implementation, and refinement of systems and processes used to collect, maintain, track, and report information related to Workforce Pell-eligible noncredit workforce programs and students across Mississippi's community college system.

Because of the number of participating colleges and the diversity of institutional data systems used across the state, the two positions will allow MCCB to divide colleges into meaningful implementation segments based either on institutional grouping or shared data systems and reporting structures. This structure will support more effective technical assistance, implementation coordination, troubleshooting, systems alignment, and reporting consistency across institutions.

The positions support the planning, development, implementation, and ongoing refinement of systems and processes used to collect, maintain, track, and report information related to noncredit workforce programs and students. Responsibilities include assisting with the establishment of consistent data structures, definitions, reporting protocols, and documentation practices that support student enrollment, participation, progression, completion, funding, and employment outcome reporting.

The specialists will coordinate closely with agency staff, institutional personnel, workforce partners, financial aid offices, and technical implementation staff to improve the accuracy, consistency, and timeliness of noncredit workforce data. Responsibilities also include supporting statewide reporting alignment; assisting colleges with integration of Workforce Pell participant data into institutional and statewide reporting systems; supporting accountability and compliance activities; assisting with audit readiness and documentation practices; supporting state and federal reporting requirements; and assisting with funding oversight and institutional implementation coordination.

Statewide Data Systems Updates
Year 1: $50,000
Year 2: $0
Year 3: $0
Year 4: $0
Total: $50,000

The statewide data systems updates will support modifications and enhancements necessary to improve the collection, integration, reporting, and management of Workforce Pell participant-level data across Mississippi's community college system. Activities may include updates to reporting structures, data definitions, reporting

processes, statewide data coordination protocols, and related implementation activities necessary to support Workforce Pell operationalization and statewide reporting alignment.

G. Construction $0

No construction costs are requested under the MCCB subaward budget.

H. Indirect Costs $0

No indirect costs are requested under the MCCB subaward budget. MCCB is prioritizing direct investment into statewide Workforce Pell implementation support, statewide reporting coordination, systems modernization activities, and institutional technical assistance associated with SCC6 project objectives.

Project Narrative File(s)

*** Mandatory Project Narrative File Filename:** FINAL_Project Narrative.pdf

Add Mandatory Project Narrative File | Delete Mandatory Project Narrative File | View Mandatory Project Narrative File

To add more Project Narrative File attachments, please use the attachment buttons below.

Add Optional Project Narrative File | Delete Optional Project Narrative File | View Optional Project Narrative File

Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways Initiative is a statewide systems-building effort designed to move Mississippi from a strong workforce infrastructure to full Workforce Pell (WFP) implementation at scale. Mississippi enters this work with significant assets already in place, including coordinated governance through AccelerateMS and the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), a data-driven methodology for identifying in-demand, high-wage, high-skill occupations, and a nationally recognized state longitudinal data system (SLDS) led by Mississippi State University's National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research Center (NSPARC). Mississippi is advancing a comprehensive modernization of its workforce development system by intentionally aligning education and workforce training programs with industry demand, priority occupations, and measurable outcomes that demonstrate value for the students, employers, and the state's economy.

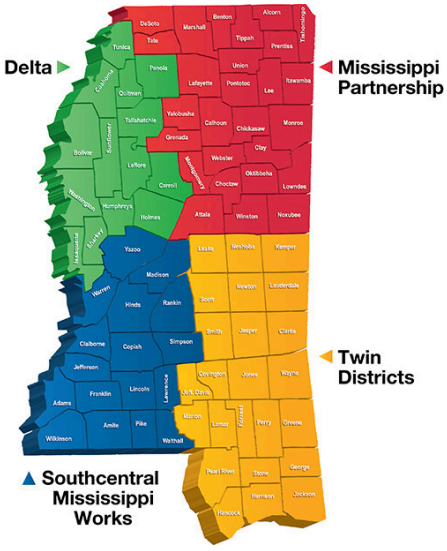
This next phase focuses on scaling consistency across institutions. While Mississippi has workforce-aligned programs, employer partnerships, and strong state-level data capacity, short-term and non-credit programs are not yet consistently structured, documented, or reported in ways that fully support WFP eligibility, Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) alignment, employer validation, and participant-level outcome measurement uniformly across all community colleges. This initiative addresses these challenges through a coordinated, statewide approach to align programs in priority sectors, strengthen employer engagement, and modernize institutional data systems so both credit and non-credit participants can be captured, tracked, and connected to verifiable outcomes. Through this approach, Mississippi will create a scalable statewide model for WFP implementation by helping colleges enhance their existing SIS to capture noncredit data, document eligibility, support ETPL alignment, and report student-level enrollment, completion, and employment outcomes tied to verifiable workforce results.

I. STATEMENT OF NEED

A. Labor Market Area, Industry Sector(s), and Occupational Employer Demand

1. Define the proposed labor market area or areas. Mississippi faces a structural workforce challenge characterized by a persistent gap between employer demand and the skills of the available workforce, particularly in middle-skill, high-demand occupations. Critically, approximately three-quarters of jobs in Mississippi require education beyond high school but less than a four-year degree, placing significant pressure on the state's workforce system to deliver short-term, industry-aligned training at scale. These "middle-skill" roles represent the primary pathway to economic mobility for the state's residents.[1] Without targeted investment in workforce-aligned training programs, the state risks being unable to meet employer demand, limiting both economic growth and opportunity.

Mississippi operates within a single, coordinated statewide labor market system, supported by unified workforce strategy leadership through AccelerateMS and the SWIB. This structure enables consistent identification of in-demand occupations, alignment of training programs, and coordination across workforce and education systems.



Within this statewide framework, labor demand is distributed across four Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs), each characterized by distinct industry concentrations and workforce conditions. The LWDAs follow demographic and economic boundaries, with each LWDA contributing to Mississippi's economic sector goals.

[1] Mississippi WIOA State Plan, Labor Market Characteristics (pp. 6–7)

2. Industry sectors in which the Workforce Pell-eligible programs will be developed.

Mississippi's SCC6 project focuses on four industry sectors that are both economically significant and regionally anchored, ensuring strong alignment between employer demand, program design, and WFP program delivery. Sectors were selected based on state labor market analysis, LWDA industry concentrations, and AccelerateMS Priority Occupations framework.

Table 1. Local Workforce Development Areas and Industry Sectors of Focus	
Mississippi Partnership	**ADVANCED MANUFACTURING** ● Adv. Manufacturing is an anchor, 40% of the state's manufacturing activity ● Recent regional investments include GE Aerospace's $11 million expansion, creating 100 jobs, and Yancey Engineered Solutions' $20.8 million facility expected to create 250 jobs and significant demand for skilled welders [23]
Twin Districts	**AM SHIPBUILDING & MARITIME INDUSTRY** ● The region's defense infrastructure supports shipbuilding & aerospace activity. ● The Mississippi SHIPs initiative is a strategic workforce development effort designed to strengthen Mississippi's defense shipbuilding workforce, modernize the shipbuilding supply chain, and expand a skilled talent pipeline.[4]
Southcentral Mississippi Works	**CONSTRUCTION/ INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE** ● Three new hyperscale data centers and two new power plants are under construction in this LWDA, expected to create ~1,300 job opportunities ● Construction companies involved in data center construction grew by 66.5%.[5] ● Amazon Web Services announced a $10 billion data center investment in Madison County, which is expected to create at least 1,000 high-paying jobs.
Delta	**HEALTHCARE** ● Healthcare represents the largest employment sector in Mississippi ● WIOA analysis shows demand exceeds supply by 2,362 healthcare workers. ● EMT/paramedic pathways are essential for improving access to care in rural areas

3. List the target occupations tied to those programs. Mississippi has established a formal methodology for identifying target occupations using the AccelerateMS Annual Priority Occupations methodology, which applies a standardized analysis of labor market demand, wage

[2] *GE Aerospace to Expand Batesville Operations, Create 100 New Jobs*, Mississippi Monitor.
[3] Yancey Engineered Solutions Locating Operations in Panola County, Mississippi Development Authority.
[4] https://mdes.ms.gov/news/2025/10/21/mdes-secures-57-million-federal-grant-for-shipbuilding-skills-training/
[5] Mississippi WIOA State Plan, Economic and Workforce Analysis (2024–2027).

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levels, and workforce supply gaps. This process incorporates real-time job postings, employment projections, and wage data to identify occupations that represent significant workforce needs.[6]

Table 2. Industry Sector / Priority Occupations for WFP Programs	
Advanced Manufacturing Automation Technician Plumber Welder	**Construction/ Information Infrastructure** Commercial Truck Driver Electric Line Worker Engineering Operation Techs General Construction Worker Heavy Equipment Operator Industrial Maintenance Welder
Advanced Manufacturing/ Shipbuilding Comm. Truck Driver Welder	**Healthcare** Paramedic

To qualify as a Priority Occupation, a role must demonstrate sustained employer demand, provide wages at or above the state's living wage threshold ($20.75/hour as of 2026), and require education or training beyond a high school diploma. Occupations must appear across multiple industry ecosystems to ensure statewide economic significance.

4. Projected Employment Demand. Mississippi's targeted sectors continue to demonstrate strong, sustained workforce demand, driven by major economic development activity and projected long-term job growth. The State's 2024–2028 WIOA Combined State Plan projects Mississippi will add approximately 120,000 jobs by 2032, with the strongest growth occurring in the Mississippi Partnership, South Central Mississippi Works, and Twin Districts workforce regions that comprise the proposed service area.[7] Advanced manufacturing remains a priority sector, employing more than 59,000 workers statewide. Major employers, including Toyota, Nissan, and Ingalls Shipbuilding, continue to expand operations, increasing demand for welders, industrial maintenance technicians, and CDL drivers.[8] In the Twin Districts region, shipbuilding, aerospace, and defense activities anchored by multiple military installations continue to generate significant demand for skilled technical occupations.

[6] AccelerateMS, Development of Annual Priority Occupations Methodology and 2026 List
[7] Mississippi Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Combined State Plan, Table 3: Anticipated Job Growth by LWDA
[8] Mississippi Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Combined State Plan, Economic and Workforce Analysis

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Demand in construction and information infrastructure is accelerating rapidly due to data center and energy infrastructure projects statewide. South Central Mississippi Works currently has three hyperscale data centers and two new power plants under construction, generating approximately 1,300 projected jobs, while an additional advanced power plant project in the Delta region is creating approximately 800 jobs. Healthcare also remains Mississippi's largest employment sector, employing nearly 189,000 workers statewide, with continued shortages in Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)/Paramedic, nursing, and allied health, particularly in rural regions. As reflected in their letters, employer partners supporting this initiative collectively employ approximately 49,300 workers statewide and project demand for more than 5,068 additional hires over the next four years. These employer-validated projections confirm sustained labor market demand for WFP-aligned pathways in the targeted LWDA sectors.

Table 3: Projected Employment Demand
Lightcast. (2025). Occupation and industry employment datasets. MDES.

SOC Code	Occupation	Current Employment	2030 Project Employment	% Growth	Total Ann. Openings
47-2152	Plumbers	5,136	5,401	5%	1,999
51-4121	Welders	7,378	7,493	2%	3,582
53-3032	Commercial Truck Drivers	41,088	43,163	5%	19,097
49-9051	Electrical Line Workers	1,919	1,996	4%	680
47-2061	General Construction Workers	20,202	21,542	6%	7,954
47-2073	Heavy Equipment Operators	4,987	5,168	4%	1,976
49-9041	Industrial Maintenance/ Multicraft	5,537	5,958	8%	2,298
17-3024-	Automation Technicians/ Electro-Mechanical	340	347	2%	33
17-3026	Industrial Engineering Technicians / EOTs	391	414	6%	162
29-2042	EMT/Paramedics	1,454	1,595	8%	1,877

B. Education and Workforce Data Sharing and Systems Integration

1. Current State of Data Sharing and Data Integration. Over the past decade, Mississippi has made substantial progress toward integrated workforce and education data systems. The State

has developed a mature SLDS capable of linking education and workforce records, implemented wage-record matching processes, including interstate matching through State Wage Interchange System (SWIS) where available. An established *Workforce Pell Outcomes Measurement Framework* defines how completion, employment, and earnings outcomes will be measured using administrative data. Recent coordination through the state's WFP Implementation Committee has further strengthened collaboration among AccelerateMS, MCCB, MDES, NSPARC, and institutional partners and clarified statewide reporting and outcome requirements. Despite this progress, Mississippi has not yet achieved the level of institutional data integration required to fully meet SCC6 and WFP requirements. The primary challenge is that the community colleges' non-credit workforce systems are not currently configured to function as aid-eligible student systems. Non-credit workforce participants are often tracked separately from student information systems (SIS), financial aid systems, enrollment reporting systems, and MCCB reporting structures. In addition, the schools do not use a uniform SIS platform; institutions operate across multiple systems (e.g., Ellucian, Workday, PeopleSoft, Jenzabar, CampusKey), and these systems cannot effectively track and manage non-credit workforce participants as aid-eligible students. As a result, colleges face challenges enrolling non-credit students as WFP participants, connecting them to financial aid systems, and consistently capturing participant-level data required for WFP and ETPL reporting.

2. Strategies, Plans, and Processes to Improve Data Sharing and Integration. Mississippi will address these barriers through a statewide data integration strategy that aligns institutional technology, MCCB reporting systems, statewide data infrastructure, and employer-informed workforce systems with WFP requirements. The project prioritizes integration and

modernization rather than replacement of existing systems and leverages Mississippi's established SLDS infrastructure and cross-agency partnerships.

Table 4. Barriers and Grant Strategies

Barrier	Description	Grant Strategy
Technology	Institutional SIS, enrollment, workforce training, and financial aid systems do not support non-credit WFP participants	Fund institutional technology upgrades and provide technical assistance to configure SIS, enrollment, training, financial aid, attendance, & reporting
	Existing MCCB reporting systems and statewide reporting structures were not designed to capture WFP non-credit participants as aid-eligible & enrolled.	Support MCCB reporting modifications, expanded data capacity, and updates to statewide reporting processes needed to align WFP participant reporting across institutions.
Financial/ Capacity	Community colleges lack sufficient implementation support and capacity to transition to WFP-ready systems.	Implementation fund to support institutional staffing, equipment, technology, and operational needs associated with WFP implementation.
Technical Expertise	Specialized expertise to align SIS systems, financial aid processes, data mapping, and reporting workflows with WFP	Statewide Technical Coordinator to support institutional system alignment, data mapping, workflow integration, staff training, and reporting
Data Access and Use	Institutions do not have secure, governed access to linked education and workforce outcomes data for program-level analysis	NSPARC will develop a Secure Research Enclave providing approved users with secure access to linked education and workforce outcomes data.
Employer Validation	Employer engagement and competency validation processes are not consistently connected to statewide program development and outcome analysis.	Strengthen employer engagement through the MSBA WorkFuture Institute, including structured industry table meetings that validate competencies, workforce demand, and program alignment.

3. Impacts of Improved Data Access and Integration. Improved data sharing and integration will enable Mississippi to fully operationalize WFP implementation by allowing community colleges to consistently enroll and track non-credit participants, connect students to financial aid systems, and report standardized participant-level data through MCCB into the SLDS. Enhanced access to linked education and workforce outcomes data will strengthen the State's ability to validate completion, employment, earnings, and credential outcomes; improve ETPL reporting and program approval processes; support continuous program improvement; and ensure WFP programs are aligned with employer demand and measurable labor market value. Over time,

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these improvements will reduce reporting burden, improve statewide data consistency, and create a scalable, data-driven framework for WFP implementation.

II. EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

A. Capacity-Building Indicators

1. Workforce Pell-Eligible Programs Developed or Enhanced

The *Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways Initiative* will support the development and enhancement of short-term workforce programs aligned with employer demand, state-defined priority occupations, and WFP eligibility requirements. Over four years, this initiative will support the development or enhancement of 19 WFP–aligned programs across 15 participating institutions, including 4 new programs and 15 enhanced programs aligned to the targeted occupations identified in Table 2. A projected 1568 participants will be enrolled in these programs over the grant performance period. All programs are listed by sector, target occupation, credential, and participating institutions below in Table 5.

a. Data-Driven Program Selection and Enhancement. Mississippi will use a multi-layered data framework to determine which programs to develop or enhance. At the core of this process is the AccelerateMS *Priority Occupations* methodology, which identifies occupations based on demonstrated employer demand, wage thresholds aligned to economic self-sufficiency, and postsecondary skill requirements. Statewide data is further refined through regional labor market analysis aligned to the four LWDAs, ensuring that program development reflects both statewide priorities and localized employer demand. Additional data sources include the WIOA State Plan labor market analysis and institutional program performance data.

b. Employer Engagement in Program Design and Validation. Employer engagement within this initiative will move beyond traditional advisory structures to a coordinated, statewide model for collecting and applying employer input to program design, validation, and continuous

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improvement. Through AccelerateMS's Talent Solutions division and a formal partnership with the Mississippi Business Alliance Foundation (MSBA) WorkFuture Institute, Mississippi will convene structured industry table meetings that bring together employers, education providers, workforce partners, and state leadership to identify workforce needs, validate competencies, define technical skill requirements, and inform career pathway development across sectors and regions. This approach ensures that employer input is systematically collected and directly tied to curriculum design, credential alignment, hiring requirements, and workforce demand, while creating a scalable framework for continuous employer engagement and program refinement.

c. Alignment with Workforce Pell Eligibility Requirements. All programs developed or enhanced through this initiative will be structured to meet WFP eligibility requirements from the outset, including alignment to high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations identified by AccelerateMS; program lengths between 150 and 599 clock hours and 8 to 15 weeks in duration; and documented employer engagement through competency validation, curriculum review, and industry-recognized credentials. Programs will lead to stackable, portable postsecondary credentials that articulate into additional certificate or degree pathways, ensuring that short-term training serves as part of a broader career pathway rather than a stand-alone credential. Programs will also incorporate workforce demand analysis, employer validation, and performance tracking structures necessary to support Workforce Pell eligibility and ETPL participation. In addition, Mississippi will prioritize programs capable of meeting WFP accountability requirements related to completion rates, job placement, and value-added earnings outcomes through the use of linked education and workforce data systems and ongoing employer-informed program evaluation. The programs in Table 5 are the first programs selected by each institution. Throughout the grant

performance period, community colleges will continue developing WFP-eligible programs in other sectors based on employer demand.

Table 5: Workforce Pell Eligible Programs for Development or Enhancement

Industry Sector	Target Occupation(s)	New or Existing	Program	Credential	Institutions
Healthcare	Paramedic	Existing	EMT Basic	EMT Basic	MDCC
	Paramedic	Existing	EMT Basic	EMT Basic	Coahoma
Advanced Manufacturing	Welder	Existing	Welding Level 1	NCCER Core	ECCC
	Welder	Existing	Welding Level 1	NCCER Core	EMCC
	Welder	Existing	Welding Level 1	NCCER Core	NECC
	Precision Machinist	New	CNC	NCCER Core	ECCC
	Automation Tech	New	Aut. Control Technician	Cert. Completion	Itawamba
	Plumber	New	Work-Ready Plumbing	Cert. Completion	NWCC
Advanced Manufacturing / Shipbuilding	Welder	New	Welding Level 1	NCCER Core	PRCC
	Welder	Existing	Welding Level 1	AWS WQR D1.1	Jones
	Welder	Existing	Welding Level 1	NCCER Core	Meridian CC
	CDL Drivers	Existing	Commercial Truck Driving	CDL A License	Ms Gulf Coast
Construction/ Information Infrastructure	Electric Line Worker	Existing	Electrical Line Worker	Cert. Completion	Hinds
	Heavy Equ. Oper.	Existing	Logging Academy	Log. Man. Cert	Hinds
	Eng. Operation Tech	New	Data Center EOT	Cert. Completion	Hinds
	Welder	Existing	Welding Level 1	NCCER Core	Cop.-Lincoln
	Comm. Construction	Existing	Const. NCCER Core	NCCER Core	Holmes
	Industrial Maint.	Existing	Multi-Craft Tech Level 1	Cert. Completion	Holmes
	CDL	Existing	Commercial Truck Driving	CDL A License	SMCC

2. Programs Added to the State ETPL. Mississippi has an established statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) process administered by MDES that provides a strong foundation for aligning Workforce Pell (WFP) programs with workforce system requirements. Through SCC6, consortium institutions will strengthen participant-level reporting, non-credit student tracking, and workforce outcome validation to support ETPL participation, continued eligibility reporting, and Workforce Pell accountability requirements.

3. Statewide Data Integration and Use. Mississippi will address state-level education and workforce data integration by building on its existing SLDS rather than creating a new standalone system. With their updated SIS systems, community colleges will collect standardized

participant-level data for WFP-aligned programs, including enrollment, completion, program cost, and related program records, and transmit those data through MCCB for integration into the SLDS. NSPARC will link these records with employment and earnings outcomes using MDES unemployment insurance wage records. This data framework will allow AccelerateMS, MCCB, NSPARC, and colleges to evaluate program effectiveness, validate outcomes, identify training gaps, and inform updates to priority occupations and program design.

B. Participant Tracking Plan. Over the 48-month performance period, the *Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways Initiative* anticipates enrolling an estimated 1568 participants across all proposed WFP-aligned programs. These estimates are based on institutional capacity, historical enrollment patterns, and projected program expansion supported through grant activities. Enrollment projections by program & institution are provided in Table 6.

Table 6. Community College Enrollment Projections

LWDA Planning District	Community College	Program	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Total
Delta / Healthcare	Mississippi Delta	EMT	15	15	15	15	60
	Coahoma	EMT	15	15	15	15	60
Mississippi Partnership / Advanced Manufacturing	East Central	Precision Machinist	10	10	10	10	40
	East Central	Welder	15	15	15	15	60
	East Mississippi	Welder	10	10	10	10	40
	Itawamba	Automation Technician	10	10	10	10	40
	NE Mississippi	Welding	40	40	40	40	160
	NW Mississippi	Plumbing	TBD	14	14	14	42
Twin Districts/ Shipbuilding	Pearl River	Welder	24	39	39	39	141
	Jones County	Welder	45	45	45	45	180
	Meridian	Welder	10	10	10	10	40
	Ms.Gulf Coast	Comm. Truck Driving	15	15	15	15	60
South Central Mississippi Works/ Construction (Information Infrastructure)	Hinds	Electric Line Worker	38	38	38	38	152
	Hinds	Heavy Equip. Oper.	17	17	17	17	68
	Hinds	Eng. Operations Tech	0	15	15	15	45
	Copiah-Lincoln	Welder	45	45	45	45	180

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	SMCC	Comm. Truck Driving	20	20	20	20	80
	Holmes	Comm. Construction	15	15	15	15	60
	Holmes	Industrial Maintenance/ Multi-Craft Level 1	15	15	15	15	60

1. Definition and Documentation of Enrollment. For this project, a participant will be considered enrolled once an individual is registered for and has begun a WFP-aligned short-term training program at a participating community college. Enrollment will be documented through institutional student information systems using a unique participant record that includes required demographic, program, and enrollment data. AccelerateMS, MCCB, and NSPARC will establish standardized enrollment definitions and required data elements to ensure consistency across participating institutions and alignment with federal reporting requirements.

2. Participant Data Collection and Tracking System. Participant-level data, including enrollment, completion, credential attainment, and program participation records, will be collected by participating colleges and transmitted through MCCB into the SLDS using standardized reporting protocols and validation procedures. Through partnerships with MDES and NSPARC, participant records will be linked with unemployment insurance wage data to support longitudinal tracking of employment and earnings outcomes. The project supports participant tracking and federal reporting through Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) and Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS) reporting processes, and includes staff training, system alignment, technical assistance, and data validation activities to ensure accurate and consistent reporting throughout the grant period.

C. Project Work Plan and Annual Milestones. The detailed project work plan, including implementation steps, timelines, milestones, responsible entities, OER posting, Linked Open Data on Credentials, evaluation milestones, and equipment/altered space processes, is provided in the Work Plan attachment and aligns with the requirements outlined in Appendix C.

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III. PROJECT DESIGN.

The *Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways Initiative* is designed as a coordinated, statewide effort to align employer demand, program design, and education and workforce data systems within a unified framework that supports the development and scaling of WFP–eligible programs. Mississippi enters this work with critical foundational elements already in place, including a statewide workforce strategy led by AccelerateMS, a comprehensive community college system serving all regions of the state, employer-validated priority occupations, and a mature longitudinal data infrastructure capable of linking education and workforce outcomes. However, these assets are not yet consistently operationalized at the program level, particularly for short-term and non-credit workforce programs. This project addresses that gap through a structured approach that standardizes institutional practices, strengthens employer engagement, and modernizes data systems to enable full implementation of WFP at scale.

A. Institutions of Higher Education Selection.

1. Institution Coordinating Entity. AccelerateMS will serve as the Institution Coordinating Entity for the *Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways Initiative*. In this role, AccelerateMS will coordinate the statewide consortium, align program development with Mississippi's WFP strategy, support employer and workforce system engagement, and ensure programs remain connected to priority occupations and the State's WFP approval framework. AccelerateMS will contribute dedicated personnel and resources, including a 1.0 FTE Statewide Coordinator to support WFP implementation and data management support, a "Technical System Upgrade Fund" to help community colleges update SIS and related systems for non-credit WFP tracking and financial aid integration, and an "Implementation Fund" to provide additional resources to colleges as they begin WFP program implementation. AccelerateMS will also

continue its core statewide functions, including leading workforce strategy, WFP implementation, maintaining the Priority Occupations List, and aligning education & workforce investments with employer demand.

2. Majority of Community Colleges and Labor Market Alignment. Northwest Mississippi Community College will serve as the lead applicant, fiscal agent, and grant administrator, responsible for grant management, compliance, budget oversight, reporting, and day-to-day project administration. The consortium includes all 15 public community colleges in Mississippi (see Table 6), exceeding the FOA requirement for institutional participation. Institutions are organized by Mississippi's four LWDAs, aligning program delivery with the labor market areas described in the Statement of Need and ensuring statewide coverage while supporting region-specific sector strategies.

3. State Leadership Letters of Support. The application includes the required state leadership letters demonstrating commitment to state-level coordination, data sharing, and the WFP implementation. Group A support is provided by Governor Tate Reeves and the SWIB Chairman Patrick Sullivan; Group B support is provided by the Mississippi Department of Education, inclusive of Career, Technical, and Workforce Education.

4. Institution Consortium Commitments. Each participating community college has provided documentation of commitment confirming its role in WFP implementation activities and continued accreditation throughout the grant period. These letters demonstrate that each institution understands and accepts its project responsibilities and will participate in the statewide systems-building work necessary to align short-term training programs with WFP eligibility.

B. Core Element 1: Industry-Driven Strategies with Demonstrated Employer Value

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1. Employer Engagement in Program Design and Delivery. Mississippi's SCC6 strategy is grounded in an employer-led workforce model designed to ensure WFP-aligned programs reflect real-time labor market demand, employer hiring requirements, and industry-valued skills and credentials. Through AccelerateMS, its Talent Solutions division, and a formal partnership with the MSBA WorkFuture Institute, the project will implement a coordinated statewide employer engagement strategy that moves beyond traditional advisory committees to a structured model for translating employer workforce needs into actionable program design, competency frameworks, credential validation, and hiring alignment.

This approach builds on Mississippi's existing workforce ecosystem, which already includes strong coordination among employers, community colleges, workforce agencies, economic development organizations, and sector intermediaries. Through SCC6, these relationships will be operationalized into recurring sector- and region-based industry table meetings facilitated by MSBA's WorkFuture Institute. These engagements will bring together employers, education providers, workforce partners, and state leadership to identify workforce demand, define technical skills, validate credentials, map pathways, and inform program design.

Table 7. Employer Engagement Strategy

Employer Role	Mississippi Implementation Strategy	Workforce Pell Impact
Strategic leadership and workforce alignment	The MSBA Workforce Institute will convene sector-based industry tables with employers, colleges, and workforce leaders to validate Priority Occupations, hiring demand, and regional workforce gaps.	Aligns WFP programs with documented employer demand and statewide workforce priorities.
Skills, competencies, and credential validation	Employers will work through the MSBA Workforce Institute & AccelerateMS Talent Solutions to identify technical competencies, durable skills, advancement skills, and credentials tied to targeted occupations.	Ensures WFP pathways reflect employer-defined skill and credential requirements.
Curriculum and career pathway design	Employer partners will review instructional sequencing, assessments, stackable credential pathways, and work-based learning alignment to support WFP program development and credit articulation.	Strengthens alignment between training delivery, career mobility, and employer hiring expectations.

Hiring, work-based learning, and continuous improvement	Employers will support internships, apprenticeships, clinical placements, recruitment activities, hiring pathways, and ongoing review of graduate outcomes and evolving workforce needs.	Improves placement outcomes and strengthens ongoing employer validation of WFP programs.

Mississippi will further strengthen this strategy through alignment with a statewide Talent Marketplace approach designed to support skills-first hiring and stronger alignment between workforce training and employment outcomes. Through its employer networks, MSBA will help employers translate hiring requirements into validated skills frameworks that can be incorporated into WFP program design, credentialing, and learner employment pathways. The project will support emerging Learning and Employment Record (LER) infrastructure, digital credential wallets, and AI-enabled skills-to-job matching strategies. This approach creates a stronger employer validation loop in which employers define competencies, colleges align curriculum to those competencies, learners earn credentials documenting acquired skills, and employers use those verified skills records to support hiring, placement, advancement, and workforce planning.

C. Core Element 2 Worker Mobility through Career Pathways Programs

1. Identification of Pathways. The *Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways Initiative* supports worker mobility by developing structured career pathways that connect short-term WFP-eligible programs to longer-term education, credential attainment, and employment opportunities. The Welding Pathway example in Table 8 demonstrates a pathway model that will be applied to WFP programs developed through this initiative.

Table 8. Welding Illustrative Career Pathway Example

Program	Credit Articulation / Stackability	Target Role/ Median Wages	Next Step
Level: Entry **Program:** Welding I **Credential:** NCCER Core **Length:** 225 Clock Hours ***WFP Eligible**	Articulated credit awarded through credit by credential for pre-approved industry certification	Entry-Level Welder / Welder Helper Wage: $38,000-$45,000	Welding Technology Career Certificate, Technical Certificate, or AAS

Level: Mid **Program/ Credential:** Welding Technology Career Certificate / Tech. Certificate **Length:** 31–46 credit hours	Builds from transcripted WLT 1173 and WLT 1232 credit	Welder / Structural Welder / Production Welder Wage: $45,000-$55,000	Associate of Applied Science in Welding and Cutting Technology
Level: Advanced **Program/ Credential:** Associate of Applied Science in Welding and Cutting Technology **Length:** 61 credit hours	Full AAS pathway with NCCER and advanced welding competencies	Pipe Welder / Welding Technician / Welding Supervisor Wage: $55,000 - $70,000	Specialized credentials, inspection, supervision, or advanced technical roles

2. Alignment to Industry Sector of Focus. All WFP-eligible programs will align to Mississippi's priority sectors, regional labor market demand, and employer-validated occupations. Welding is used as the illustrative model because it supports three targeted sectors: advanced manufacturing, construction/information infrastructure, and shipbuilding. In these sectors, welding connects directly to fabrication, CNC/plasma cutting, robotics, structural steel, industrial construction, pipe and plate welding, outfitting, ship systems, and coded welds.
This approach will apply across all pathways. Each program will be developed with employer input and aligned to occupations with demonstrated regional need and growth potential.

3. Career Pathways, Stackability & Flexibility. The WFP programs will serve as a short-term, high-value entry point into a broader stackable pathway. The welding pathway illustrates the model: students may begin with Welding I/NCCER Core, receive articulated credit, and continue into a Welding Technology Career Certificate, Technical Certificate, or AAS. As skills and credentials stack, participants can progress from welder helper to production, structural, pipe, shipyard, technician, inspection, or supervisory roles. Unless designated as a single-credential program, all WFP programs will follow this same structure: short-term training with immediate employment value, clear next steps into certificates or degrees, and multiple on- and off-ramps.

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Participants may enter at the foundational level, exit for employment after earning a credential, and later return to complete additional credentials as experience or career goals change.

4. Credit Articulation and Academic Progression. Because programs are delivered through Mississippi's community college system, WFP training will be intentionally connected to credit-bearing pathways. The welding model provides the structure: non-credit training leads to NCCER Core and articulated credit for approved welding coursework, which applies toward a Career Certificate, Technical Certificate, or AAS. The project will support curriculum crosswalks, credit-by-credential processes, prior learning assessment, advising maps, and articulation agreements so students who complete WFP programs can receive academic credit when they enroll in the related certificate or degree pathway.

These pathways are also designed for statewide scalability. The initial pathway identified for each college reflects that college's starting point and regional LWDA demand, but all programs, crosswalks, and articulation models developed through the grant will be available for adoption by other Mississippi community colleges. As demand shifts, additional colleges may implement additional pathways throughout the grant period.

5. Wage and Career Growth. Each pathway is designed to produce measurable labor market value by connecting short-term training to in-demand jobs, wage progression, and long-term mobility. In welding, participants may move from entry-level roles earning approximately $38,000–$45,000 into structural, pipe, shipyard, technician, or supervisory roles with earnings that may reach $55,000–$70,000 or more, depending on specialization and experience. The same model will guide the WFP-eligible programs and occupations developed in each sector.

D. Core Element 3 Workforce System Integration to Expand Training Options

Mississippi's SCC6 strategy builds on an existing statewide workforce governance and data integration framework that aligns workforce development, community colleges, economic development, and employer engagement under a unified talent development strategy. Through AccelerateMS, the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), MDES, MCCB, NSPARC, and regional workforce partners, Mississippi has established coordinated systems for workforce alignment, employer engagement, credential strategy, and longitudinal data sharing that position the state to scale WFP implementation statewide.

1. Statewide Data Integration. Mississippi will implement a linked statewide data systems model connecting institutional community college data with workforce and longitudinal education systems to support WFP implementation and statewide outcome reporting. With SCC6 support, colleges will update student information systems (SIS) and related processes so non-credit workforce participants can be enrolled, awarded WFP grants, and tracked alongside credit-bearing students through enrollment, completion, credential attainment, employment, and earnings outcomes. Institutional data will flow through MCCB into the SLDS, where it can be matched with MDES wage record data. The project will establish standardized statewide data definitions, reporting protocols, and governance procedures to support consistent reporting across institutions and workforce partners.

In addition, SCC6 will support the development of a pilot Secure Research Enclave, housed and managed by NSPARC, to enable secure linkage and analysis of education and workforce data across partner institutions. The Secure Research Enclave enables Mississippi to securely link community college, SLDS, and workforce data, making it accessible for approved analysis without exposing sensitive information. This infrastructure directly supports Workforce Pell eligibility requirements related to program completion, employment, and earnings outcomes.

2. State-Level Partner Roles. Workforce system integration is supported through coordinated statewide governance, workforce delivery, employer engagement, and data-sharing structures aligned through Mississippi's unified workforce strategy.

Table 9. Statewide Workforce Pell Governance and Alignment Structure

System Component	Lead Entity	Role in Alignment
State Workforce Strategy	AccelerateMS	Aligns workforce, education, and economic development priorities; defines sector strategies and Annual Priority Occupations; coordinates statewide Workforce Pell implementation
Statewide Credential and Skills Infrastructure	AccelerateMS + SWIB Credential Committee	Aligns Workforce Pell programs to employer-validated credentials, digital credential infrastructure, LERs, and AI-enabled job-matching tools
Workforce System (WIOA, LWDAs, WIN Job Centers)	MDES	Supports workforce services, co-enrollment, employer engagement, ETPL coordination, and wage record data
Community College System	MCCB + Colleges	Delivers Workforce Pell-aligned programs; integrates non-credit workforce participants into institutional data systems; supports reporting and implementation
Data Systems	NSPARC /SLDS/ MSWorks	Manages statewide data integration, workforce outcome reporting, cross-system data sharing, and the Secure Research Enclave
Employer Engagement Infrastructure	Industry + MSBA WF Institute	Coordinates statewide employer engagement; convenes industry roundtables; validates workforce competencies, credentials, curriculum, and WBL strategies

The Governor's letter and workforce partner letters document statewide commitment to this coordinated workforce integration and data-sharing strategy.

3. Workforce System Engagement. MDES will serve as the primary WIOA partner, supporting ETPL coordination, labor market information, wage record access, workforce referrals, co-enrollment strategies, and statewide reporting alignment for Workforce Pell programs. Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs) and WIN Job Centers will support participant recruitment, career navigation, supportive service coordination, employer outreach, and connections to WFP training opportunities. These partnerships build upon Mississippi's unified workforce system established through the WIOA Combined State Plan, which integrates

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workforce development, Perkins V, economic development, and employer engagement into a coordinated statewide talent development strategy.

4. ETPL Participation. Mississippi has an established statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) process administered by MDES under WIOA, and most consortium institutions already utilize the system for workforce training programs aligned with regional labor market demand. Seven participating colleges currently maintain non-credit workforce programs on the ETPL (although they are not WFP-eligible programs), while additional institutions participate through credit-based offerings or are expanding institutional capacity for non-credit reporting and eligibility management. SCC6 will strengthen statewide ETPL participation by modernizing participant-level data collection and reporting for short-term and non-credit Workforce Pell (WFP) programs, standardizing statewide reporting procedures, and integrating institutional reporting with SLDS-linked wage outcome validation. Programs already participating in the ETPL will be updated and aligned with Workforce Pell reporting and accountability requirements, while all newly developed or newly WFP-aligned programs will be submitted for ETPL inclusion during the grant period.

E. Demonstration of Employer Engagement

1. Employer Roles and Contributions. Employer engagement is a central component of the initiative and includes a robust network of employer partners across the targeted industry sectors.

Table 10. Employer Partners and Key Contributions

LWDA/ Sector	Employer Partner	Key Contribution(s)
Delta Healthcare	• Pafford Ambulance Company • NW Mississippi Regional Medical Center • Med Stat • University of Mississippi Medical Center	• EMS workforce demand validation, clinical input, and work-based learning • Healthcare pathway design, clinical placement support, & employer validation
Mississippi Partnership Advanced Manufacturing	• Toyota • Mueller Copper Tubing • Taylor Defense Products	• Strategic leadership, advanced manufacturing competency mapping, and curriculum validation • Manufacturing skills validation, automation & maintenance pathway input

Table 10. Employer Partners and Key Contributions		
LWDA/ Sector	**Employer Partner**	**Key Contribution(s)**
Twin Districts Advanced Manufacturing / Shipbuilding	• Bollinger Shipyards • Ingalls Shipbuilding • Fairbanks Morse Defense • Structural Steel Services, Inc. • Howard Industries	• Shipbuilding workforce alignment, welding, and maritime validation • Defense manufacturing skill validation • Industrial systems pathway alignment • Welding and fabrication skills mapping
South Central Mississippi Works Construction / Information Infrastructure	• Amazon Data Services, Inc. • Hitachi • Nissan • Stribling • Entergy • Evergreen Industries • McComb Coca-Cola • McComb Diesel	• Data center workforce demand, information infrastructure skill validation • Construction workforce demand, heavy equipment, and training input • Utility, line worker, and infrastructure workforce alignment

2. Employer Engagement in Pathway Design. Each employer partner will play a defined role in supporting WFP–aligned programs, including identifying workforce demand, contributing to skills and competency mapping, validating curriculum and program design, and supporting WBL and hiring. Employer contributions will vary by sector and program, but will include a combination of advisory input, direct engagement in training activities, the provision of equipment or facilities, and participation in hiring pipelines. Employers will be engaged continuously throughout the life of the grant through structured MSBA WorkFuture Institute industry table meetings that identify workforce needs and inform program design.

3. Documented Employer Commitments. Formal letters of commitment from employer partners document their roles and contributions and confirm their participation in the project.

F. Required Third-Party Evaluation Procurement Plan. The project will competitively procure a third-party developmental evaluator consistent with federal, state, and institutional requirements. The evaluator will support continuous improvement through ongoing assessment of implementation progress, outcomes, and operational effectiveness using qualitative and quantitative data collected from project partners and participants.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND FISCAL CAPACITY

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A. Project Leadership Capacity. The grant funding will be managed through a clear division of responsibilities between Northwest Mississippi Community College (NWCC), the lead applicant and fiscal agent, and AccelerateMS, the statewide coordinating entity. NWCC will provide grant administration, fiscal oversight, compliance, reporting, and day-to-day project management. The budget includes a 100% FTE Project Director (PD) who will manage implementation, coordinate partners, track timelines and deliverables, and serve as the primary operational lead. The PD will be a senior-level professional with experience managing federally funded education or workforce initiatives, coordinating multi-partner projects, and using performance data to guide implementation. NWCC will also support the project through a 100% Data and Performance Manager, grant accounting staff, and a Technical Coordinator responsible for supporting all participating colleges with SIS implementation, non-credit student integration, data system alignment, and standardized reporting processes.

B. Organizational Structure and Roles. While NWCC maintains responsibility for grant management, AccelerateMS will play a central role in implementation through dedicated staffing and technical assistance. AccelerateMS will hire a 100% FTE Statewide Coordinator to support partner facilitation, coordinate statewide activities, and ensure alignment with Mississippi's WFP requirements and priority occupations. This combined staffing structure ensures that the project is supported by both strong institutional management at NWCC and statewide coordination and expertise through AccelerateMS. A full organizational chart & staffing plan are attached.

C. Data Management. The project will implement a coordinated, data-driven decision-making framework that clearly defines roles, timelines, and processes for tracking progress and managing performance. NWCC will serve as the central point for project data collection and

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reporting, while participating institutions will be responsible for collecting and submitting participant data on enrollment, completion, credential attainment, and program participation. Data submission will occur on a regular reporting cycle, with institutions providing standardized data extracts aligned to a common data dictionary. The Data and Performance Manager will support institutions in preparing and validating these submissions to ensure accuracy and consistency. State partners, including MDES and NSPARC/SLDS, will support validation of employment and wage outcomes. AccelerateMS will use this data to monitor alignment with statewide workforce priorities and support strategic decision-making. Project performance will be managed through regular implementation meetings led by NWCC and statewide coordination meetings facilitated by AccelerateMS. These meetings will review performance data, communicate expectations, and guide adjustments to project strategy.

D. Fiscal and Administrative Controls. NWCC maintains strong fiscal and administrative systems aligned with Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200), including internal controls, procurement policies, budget monitoring, and financial reporting processes. Financial oversight will be managed through NWCC's Business Office, with established procedures for expenditure approval, reconciliation, and compliance review. NWCC will implement subrecipient monitoring, review financial and programmatic reports, and ensure adherence to grant requirements. Procurement will follow competitive processes, and inventory systems will track equipment and assets. These controls ensure compliance, timely reporting, and protection against unallowable costs. AccelerateMS will complement NWCC's capacity by supporting statewide coordination and ensuring that project implementation remains aligned with grant requirements.

V. PAST PERFORMANCE PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY

A. Multi-Partner Management. NWCC and AccelerateMS bring complementary experience managing complex, multi-partner workforce initiatives requiring state leadership, employer

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buy-in, and coordinated implementation. NWCC has served as both lead applicant and subrecipient, managing subawards, MOUs, fiscal controls, partner communication, performance monitoring, and compliance across workforce, employer, and community partners. AccelerateMS strengthens this capacity through its statewide convening role, legislative mandate, and support from executive leadership, coordinating community colleges, K–12 systems, WIOA partners, employers, and state agencies around shared workforce priorities.

B. Management of Multimillion-Dollar Funding. NWCC has managed complex federal awards within the past five years, including more than $40 million in FY2025 federal funding and a completed $15 million ($7 million funded by U.S. EDA) career-technical education and workforce facility, delivered on time, within scope, and in compliance with federal requirements. AccelerateMS further demonstrates large-scale fiscal and programmatic capacity, having administered approximately $150 million over the past four years through MDES as fiscal agent.

C. Sustained Career Pathways and Employer Partnerships. Mississippi's workforce initiatives have produced durable partnerships and capacity beyond individual grant periods. AccelerateMS-led efforts such as the Career Coach Program, AiM UP Mississippi, and MS-SHIPS have aligned state agencies, community colleges, employers, economic developers, K–12 systems, and workforce partners to expand career pathways, strengthen employer engagement, and build long-term training infrastructure. MS-SHIPS, for example, a $6.6M award from the DoD, brings together defense manufacturers, community colleges, universities, state agencies, economic developers, and nonprofits to strengthen the shipbuilding workforce and sustain industry collaboration beyond the initial award period. These examples demonstrate that NWCC, Accelerate MS, and partners use grant funding to build scalable systems, sustained employer relationships, and lasting workforce capacity rather than time-limited projects.

ATTACHMENTS FORM

Instructions: On this form, you will attach the various files that make up your grant application. Please consult with the appropriate Agency Guidelines for more information about each needed file. Please remember that any files you attach must be in the document format and named as specified in the Guidelines.

Important: Please attach your files in the proper sequence. See the appropriate Agency Guidelines for details.

1) Please attach Attachment 1	A_ Abstract.pdf	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
2) Please attach Attachment 2	State Office Letter of Suppor	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
3) Please attach Attachment 3	State Office Letter of Suppor	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
4) Please attach Attachment 4	a. letters of commitment.pdf	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
5) Please attach Attachment 5	b_NICRA.pdf	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
6) Please attach Attachment 6	c_Financial System Risk Asses	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
7) Please attach Attachment 7	d_Organizational Chart.pdf	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
8) Please attach Attachment 8	e_PROJECT WORK PLAN.pdf	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
9) Please attach Attachment 9	f_Third-Party Evaluation Proc	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
10) Please attach Attachment 10		Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
11) Please attach Attachment 11		Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
12) Please attach Attachment 12		Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
13) Please attach Attachment 13		Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
14) Please attach Attachment 14		Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
15) Please attach Attachment 15		Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment

Abstract

Lead Applicant Organization Name: Northwest Mississippi Community College

OVERVIEW

Project Title/Name: Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways Initiative

Total Funding Requested: $8,544,213

Industry Sector(s): Advanced Manufacturing; Advanced Manufacturing / Shipbuilding; Construction / Information Infrastructure; Healthcare

Estimated Number of Participants: 1,568

Estimated Number of Recognized Postsecondary Credentials Created: 19+

Estimated Number of New Programs Developed That Are Seeking Workforce Pell Eligibility: 4

Estimated Number of Existing Programs Enhanced to Meet Eligibility Requirements for Workforce Pell: 15

Estimated Number of Programs Seeking Workforce Pell Eligibility Added to Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL): 19

PROJECT PURPOSE: *Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways Initiative* is a statewide systems-building effort designed to move Mississippi from a strong workforce infrastructure to full Workforce Pell (WFP) implementation at scale. Mississippi enters this work with significant assets already in place, including coordinated governance through AccelerateMS and the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB), a data-driven methodology for identifying in-demand, high-wage, high-skill occupations, and a nationally recognized SLDS led by Mississippi State University's NSPARC.

The project addresses statewide barriers that limit consistent Workforce Pell implementation across Mississippi's community college system, particularly challenges related to non-credit participant tracking, ETPL alignment, workforce outcome reporting, and institutional system capacity. Through SCC6, Mississippi will modernize institutional student information systems (SIS), standardize participant-level reporting, strengthen employer engagement, and integrate workforce and education data systems to support statewide Workforce Pell implementation and measurable workforce outcomes.

Led by Northwest Mississippi Community College (NWCC) as fiscal agent and coordinated statewide through AccelerateMS, the consortium includes all 15 public community colleges in Mississippi, organized across the state's four Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs). Programs will align with Mississippi's Priority Occupations framework and focus on employer-validated pathways in advanced manufacturing, shipbuilding, construction/information infrastructure, and healthcare.

The initiative will support stackable short-term career pathways connected to credit articulation, employer demand, ETPL participation, and longitudinal workforce outcomes. Mississippi will also implement a linked statewide data model connecting community college systems, MCCB,

MDES wage records, and the SLDS to strengthen workforce reporting, support Workforce Pell eligibility requirements, and improve statewide workforce planning.

SCC Partnership Institution Consortium Members: Coahoma Community College; Copiah-Lincoln Community College; East Central Community College; East Mississippi Community College; Hinds Community College; Holmes Community College; Itawamba Community College; Jones College; Meridian Community College; Mississippi Delta Community College; Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College; Northeast Mississippi Community College; Northwest Mississippi Community College; Pearl River Community College; Southwest Mississippi Community College

Institution Coordinating Entity: AccelerateMS

Employer Partners:
Advanced Manufacturing: Toyota; Mueller Copper Tubing; Taylor Defense Products;
Advanced Manufacturing / Shipbuilding: Bollinger Shipyards; Ingalls Shipbuilding; Fairbanks Morse Defense; Structural Steel Services, Inc.; Howard Industries
Construction / Information Infrastructure: Amazon; Hitachi; Nissan; Stribling; Entergy; Evergreen Industries; McComb Coca-Cola; McComb Diesel
Healthcare: Pafford Ambulance Company; Northwest Mississippi Regional Medical Center; Med Stat; University of Mississippi Medical Center

Workforce Development System Partner(s): Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) – State Workforce Agency/WIOA System Administrator; Mississippi Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs); WIN Job Centers

Optional Partner(s): Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB) – Community College System Partner; National Strategic Planning & Analysis Research Center (NSPARC), Mississippi State University – Statewide Longitudinal Data System/Data Integration Partner; Mississippi Business Alliance Foundation WorkFuture Institute – Employer Engagement Partner

PROJECT INFORMATION

Occupations Targeted:
Advanced Manufacturing: Automation Technician / Industrial Machinery Mechanics (SOC 49-9041); Precision Machinists (SOC 51-4041); Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers (SOC 51-4121); Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters (SOC 47-2152)

Advanced Manufacturing / Shipbuilding: Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers (SOC 51-4121); Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers / Commercial Truck Drivers (SOC 53-3032)

Construction / Information Infrastructure: Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers / Electric Line Workers (SOC 49-9051); Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators / Heavy Equipment Operators (SOC 47-2073); Engineering Technologists and Technicians, Except Drafters, All Other / Engineering Operations Technicians (SOC 17-3029); Construction Laborers / General Construction Workers (SOC 47-2061); Industrial Machinery Mechanics / Industrial Maintenance Technicians (SOC 49-9041); Welders, Cutters, Solderers,

and Brazers (SOC 51-4121); Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers / Commercial Truck Drivers (SOC 53-3032)

Healthcare: Paramedics/ EMTs (SOC 29-2043)

Career Pathways Program(s) to Be Created or Enhanced: Precision Machinist; Welding Level 1; Automation Technician; Plumbing; Commercial Truck Driving; Electrical Line Worker; Heavy Equipment Operations; Engineering Operations Technician; Construction NCCER Core; Multi-Craft Technician Level 1; EMT/Paramedic

Recognized Postsecondary Credential(s) to Be Awarded: NCCER Core; NCCER Welding Level 1; AWS Welding Qualifications; CDL A License; Electrical Line Worker Certificate; Multi-Craft Technician Level 1 Certificate; Precision Machinist Certificate; Automation Technician Certificate; EMT/Paramedic Credentials. Programs will be delivered through non-credit models for SCC6 funding.

Subrecipient Activities (If applicable): AccelerateMS will coordinate statewide implementation, employer engagement, workforce alignment, and WFP strategy across institutions. Participating consortium colleges will enhance existing short-term workforce programs and implement WFP-aligned pathways tied to employer demand and statewide priority occupations. Activities include curriculum alignment, employer-informed program design, stackable pathway development, credit articulation, ETPL alignment, participant recruitment and support, workforce data reporting, SIS modernization, and continuous program improvement.

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES: By the end of the grant period, Mississippi will operate a statewide WFP framework connecting community colleges, employers, workforce partners, and state agencies through shared systems for employer validation, participant tracking, workforce reporting, ETPL participation, and workforce outcomes analysis. Participating colleges will use integrated education and workforce data systems capable of capturing non-credit WFP participants and linking those records to employment and earnings outcomes through the SLDS and MDES wage records.

Mississippi's community colleges will be better equipped to deliver employer-aligned short-term training connected to stackable career pathways, articulated credit opportunities, and statewide workforce priorities. The project will create sustainable statewide infrastructure supporting Workforce Pell implementation, integrated workforce data reporting, employer engagement, and measurable workforce outcomes across Mississippi's priority industry sectors.

PUBLIC CONTACT INFORMATION

Point of Contact Name and Title: Laura Maples, Grant Coordinator
Institution: Northwest Mississippi Community College
Address: 4975 US-51, Senatobia, MS 38668
Phone Number: 662.562.3264
Email Address: LMaples@northwestms.edu

State of Mississippi

TATE REEVES
Governor

May 14, 2026

U.S. Department of Labor
Employment and Training Administration
Office of Grants Management
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the State of Mississippi, I offer my full support for the Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant (SCC6) application submitted by Northwest Mississippi Community College, in partnership with the Mississippi Community College Board, AccelerateMS, and a statewide consortium of all fifteen Mississippi community colleges. I support the state-level coordination activities proposed in this application to strengthen data integration, improve data sharing across education and workforce systems, and support the development and scaling of Workforce Pell-aligned programs with strong accountability for results.

The proposal represents a coordinated statewide effort to strengthen Mississippi's workforce system by aligning community college training with employer demand, expanding access to high-quality short-term programs, and building the institutional and state capacity necessary to implement Workforce Pell. The project is focused on advanced manufacturing, including shipbuilding, healthcare, and construction, all of which align with Mississippi's workforce priorities and employer demand across multiple regions of the state. The proposal will strengthen coordination among community colleges, workforce partners, and state agencies to improve participant-level data collection, reporting readiness, and alignment with employment outcomes and Eligible Training Provider List requirements.

The State of Mississippi is committed to supporting this work through cross-agency coordination, sustained employer engagement, and alignment of workforce and education strategy. I am confident this partnership will strengthen career pathways, improve access to high-quality training, and deliver meaningful results for Mississippi's workforce and economy.

Sincerely,

Tate Reeves
Governor

Post Office Box 139, Jackson, Mississippi 39205 • Phone (601)359-3150 • Fax (601) 359-3741

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Lance Evans, Ed.D.
State Superintendent

May 11, 2026

U.S. Department of Labor
Employment and Training Administration
Office of Grants Management
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

To Whom It May Concern:
The Mississippi Department of Education is pleased to provide formal support for Mississippi's Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant (SCC6) application, led by Northwest Mississippi Community College in partnership with the Mississippi Community College Board, AccelerateMS, and a statewide consortium of Mississippi community colleges.

This proposal reflects a coordinated, statewide strategy to strengthen Mississippi's workforce development ecosystem by aligning short-term community college training programs with employer demand, advancing system readiness for Workforce Pell implementation, and improving alignment between education delivery and workforce outcomes. The targeted focus on advanced manufacturing, including shipbuilding, healthcare, and construction, directly aligns with sectors of strategic economic importance and high workforce demand across the state.

A key strength of this initiative is its emphasis on education and workforce data integration. While Mississippi maintains robust state-level data assets, there remains a critical need to enhance alignment between institutional and state systems to ensure that non-credit workforce participants are effectively captured, tracked, and linked to employment and earnings outcomes. Strengthening this alignment is essential to supporting Workforce Pell eligibility, ensuring accountability, and driving continuous system improvement. This proposal directly addresses these priorities.

In support of this initiative, the Mississippi Department of Education, inclusive of the Office of Career, Technical, and Workforce Education, will:

- Support state-level coordination to strengthen alignment among postsecondary institutions, workforce partners, and state leadership
- Reinforce the importance of consistent data definitions, aligned reporting structures, and improved visibility into non-credit and short-term program outcomes
- Support strategies that connect Workforce Pell-eligible programs to broader post-secondary pathways, including articulation to credit-bearing programs where appropriate
- Provide leadership that advances system alignment, postsecondary workforce readiness, and data-informed decision-making across participating institutions

The Mississippi Department of Education fully supports this effort and its potential to drive improved statewide coordination, accountability, and measurable outcomes.

Sincerely,

Lance Evans, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education
Mississippi Department of Education

Mr. Brett Robinson
Associate State Superintendent CTE and Workforce Education
Mississippi Department of Education

PREVIEW Date: May 19, 2026 Workspace ID: WS01630590 Funding Opportunity Number: FOA-ETA-26-40

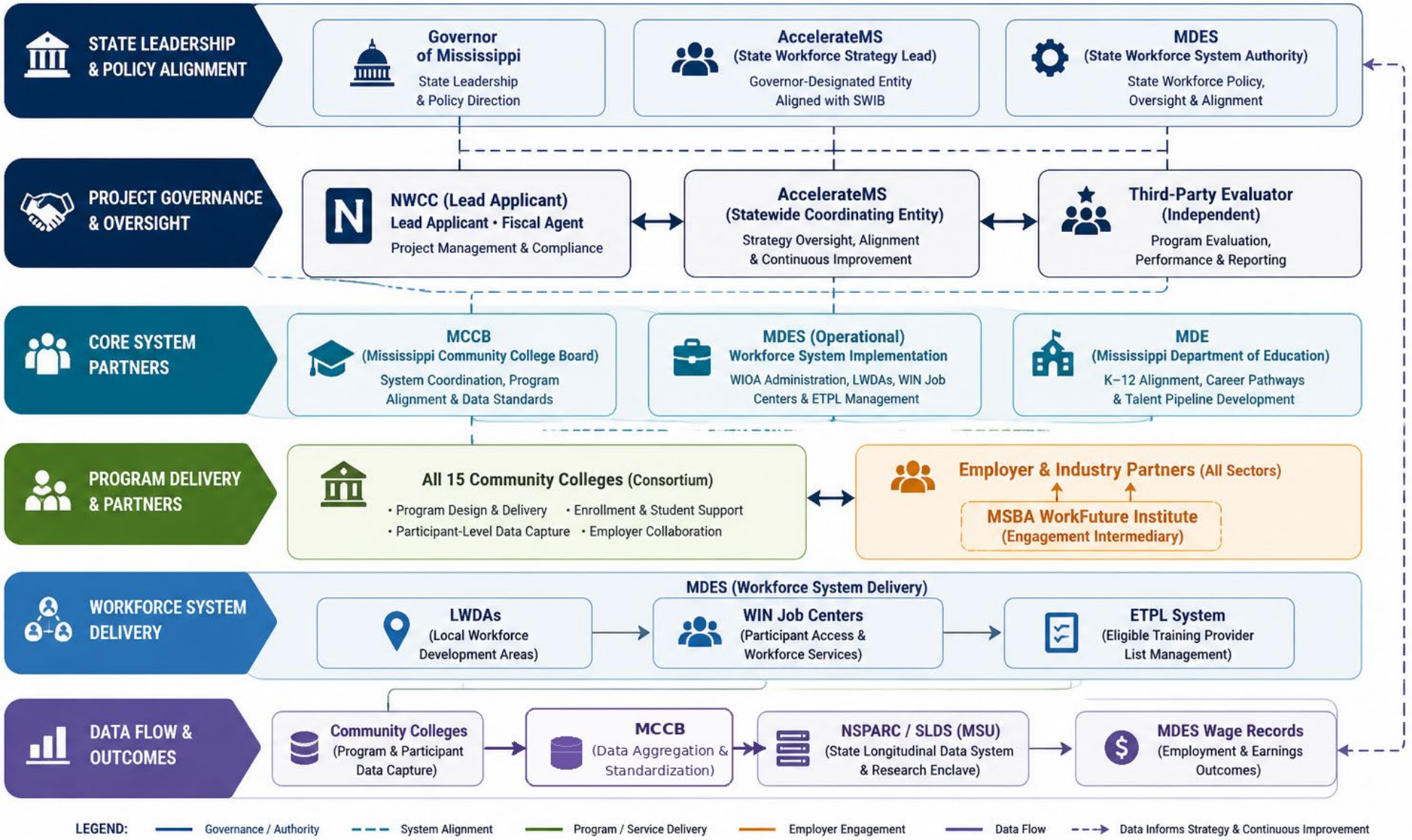
The following attachment is not included in the view since it is not a read-only PDF file.

Upon submission, this file will be transmitted to the Grantor without any data loss.

a. letters of commitment.pdf

MISSISSIPPI WORKFORCE PELL SYSTEMS & PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

Organizational Structure & Partner Relationships



This structure reflects a coordinated, statewide approach to Workforce Pell implementation that aligns policy leadership, system partners, colleges, employers, and data systems to deliver high-quality short-term training and measurable workforce outcomes for Mississippians.

MISSISSIPPI WORKFORCE PELL SYSTEMS & PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

Staffing Plan

POSITION (TITLE)	TIME COMMITMENT	ROLE DESCRIPTION
NWCC (LEAD APPLICANT) – PROJECT MANAGEMENT & OVERSIGHT		
Project Director	1.00 FTE	Provides overall leadership and day-to-day management of the grant. Oversees implementation, partner coordination, reporting, and achievement of project goals.
Data and Performance Manager	1.00 FTE	Leads data strategy and performance management. Oversees data collection, reporting, dashboards, and outcome measurement in coordination with MCCB and NSPARC.
Grants Accounting & Compliance Manager	0.20 FTE	Manages grants accounting, fiscal oversight, compliance, subrecipient monitoring, procurement, and audit requirements.
Grant Writer Coordinator	0.05 FTE	Supports grant documentation, reporting, and communication. Assists with data narratives and coordination of required deliverables.
ACCELERATEMS (STATEWIDE STRATEGY LEAD) – STATEWIDE COORDINATION		
AccelerateMS Statewide Coordinator	100% Year 1 100% Year 2 75% Year 3 50% Year 4	Leads statewide coordination of the initiative. Aligns partners, supports implementation of Workforce Pell, facilitates system integration, and ensures alignment with state workforce strategy and priority sectors.
Contracted Data Management	10 hours per week	Provides ongoing data management support for reporting, analysis, and system alignment.
CONTRACTED PARTNERS – IMPLEMENTATION & SUPPORT		
Technical Coordinator	As defined in contract	Provides technical assistance to all community colleges. Leads SIS/data system upgrades, data collection standardization, training, and ongoing technical support.
Mississippi Business Alliance Foundation (MSBA) WorkFuture Institute	As defined in contract	Leads employer engagement strategy. Facilitates sector partnerships, demand validation, industry input on training design, and connections to hiring opportunities.
MDES	As defined in contract	Supports workforce system integration including ETPL alignment, data sharing, participant access through WIN Job Centers, and coordination with LWDAs.
Third Party Evaluator	As defined in contract	Conducts independent process and outcome evaluation. Assesses implementation fidelity, participant outcomes, and provides recommendations for continuous improvement.
DATA & RESEARCH PARTNER		
NSPARC (Mississippi State University)	As defined in contract	Leads the design and implementation of the research enclave within the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) to support data integration, analysis, reporting, and evaluation for the initiative.
COMMUNITY COLLEGES (15 COLLEGES) – LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION		
Designated College Project Leads & Data Staff (Existing Staff)	Varies by college (Existing Resources)	Lead local implementation, student services coordination, data collection, employer engagement, and program delivery aligned to Workforce Pell requirements.
MCCB (SUBAWARD) – DATA SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY		
Workforce Programs Data & Accountability Specialist (Contracted)	As defined in contract	Supports the planning, development, implementation, and ongoing refinement of systems and processes used to collect, maintain, track, and report noncredit workforce program and student data. Establishes consistent data structures, definitions, and documentation practices; coordinates with colleges and program staff to improve data accuracy, consistency, and timeliness; and ensures data supports program accountability, compliance monitoring, audit readiness, funding oversight, and state, federal, and institutional reporting needs.
Workforce Programs Data & Accountability Specialist (Contracted)	As defined in contract	Same as above to ensure adequate coverage and coordination across the state's 15 community colleges.

Note: FTE = Full-Time Equivalent

SCC6 PROJECT WORK PLAN

LEAD APPLICANT: Northwest Mississippi Community College
APPLICANT TYPE: Community College
PROJECT TITLE: Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways Initiative

CORE ELEMENT 1: Industry-Driven Strategies with Demonstrated Employer Value				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
Establish a statewide employer engagement structure through AccelerateMS Talent Solutions and the MSBA WorkFuture Institute	Sector-based industry table meetings are operational across all four targeted sectors and LWDAs	Lead: AccelerateMS; Support: MSBA WorkFuture Institute, Participating Colleges, Employer Partners	Y1 M1	Y1 M6
Validate statewide and regional priority occupations using the AccelerateMS Priority Occupations methodology and employer engagement process	Employer-validated occupations and workforce demand are documented across all targeted sectors	Lead: AccelerateMS; Support: MSBA, Employer Partners, Participating Colleges	Y1 M1	Y1 M8
Align Workforce Pell-aligned programs with employer hiring requirements and industry-recognized credentials	Workforce Pell-aligned programs mapped to employer-defined competencies and industry-recognized credentials	Lead: Participating Colleges; Support: Employer Partners, MSBA Workforce Institute, MCCB, AccelerateMS	Y1 M6	Y2 M12, ongoing through grant period
Conduct employer curriculum review and pathway validation for all Workforce Pell-aligned programs	Employer validation completed for all Workforce Pell-aligned programs included in the initiative	Lead: MSBA; Support: Participating Colleges; Employer Partners, AccelerateMS	Y1 M6	Y1 M8- Y2 M12
Launch Workforce Pell-aligned programs with embedded employer engagement and work-based learning supports	Initial Workforce Pell-aligned programs launched and enrolling participants and operational statewide	Lead: Participating Colleges; Support: AccelerateMS, Employer Partners, MDES	Y1 M8	Ongoing through grant period Y4 M12
Implement statewide Talent Marketplace and skills-based alignment	Workforce Pell competencies and credentials aligned with emerging digital	Lead: AccelerateMS; Support: MSBA WorkFuture Institute,	Y2 M1	Y3 M12

CORE ELEMENT 1: Industry-Driven Strategies with Demonstrated Employer Value				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
strategies tied to Workforce Pell pathways	credential and skills-based matching strategies	Employer Partners, Participating Colleges		
Sustain employer engagement and continuous improvement processes	Ongoing employer validation, hiring feedback, and workforce demand review implemented across participating sectors and institutions	Lead: AccelerateMS; Support: Employer Partners, Participating Colleges	Y1 M6	Y4 M12

CORE ELEMENT 2: Worker Mobility through Career Pathways Programs				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
Develop statewide career pathways framework aligned to Workforce Pell-eligible programs and Priority Occupations	Career pathways framework adopted across participating institutions and targeted sectors	Lead: AccelerateMS; Support: MCCB, Participating Colleges, Employer Partners	Y1 M3	Y1 M8
Align Workforce Pell-aligned programs within stackable credential pathways	Workforce Pell-aligned programs mapped to stackable credential and degree pathways	Lead: MCCB; Support: Participating Colleges	Y1 M3	Y2 M12
Implement credit articulation and credit-by-credential processes for Workforce Pell programs	Credit articulation and credit-by-credential processes operational across participating institutions	Lead: MCCB; Support: Participating Colleges	Y1 M6	Y2 M12
Develop statewide curriculum crosswalks and prior learning assessment processes	Curriculum crosswalks and PLA processes implemented for Workforce Pell-aligned programs	Lead: MCCB; Support: Participating Colleges	Y1 M9	Y2 M12
Establish entry, exit, and re-entry points within Workforce Pell-aligned pathways	Flexible entry, exit, and re-entry points implemented across participating programs	Lead: Participating Colleges; Support: MCCB, Workforce System Partners	Y1 M9	Y2 M12
Implement advising and participant support	Workforce Pell participants receive advising, navigation,	Lead: Participating Colleges; Support:	Y1 M12	Y4 M12

CORE ELEMENT 2: Worker Mobility through Career Pathways Programs				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
strategies aligned with Workforce Pell pathways	and career pathway support services	WIN Job Centers, MDES, AccelerateMS		
Support participant advancement into employment and additional credentials	Participants transition into employment and continue progression through stackable pathways	Lead: Participating Colleges; Support: Employer Partners, Workforce System Partners	Y1 M12	Y4 M12
Expand statewide adoption of Workforce Pell-aligned pathway models	Additional participating colleges adopt Workforce Pell pathway models developed through the initiative	Lead: MCCB; Support: Participating Colleges, AccelerateMS	Y2 M1	Y4 M12

CORE ELEMENT 3: Workforce System Integration to Expand Training Options				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
Coordinate statewide Workforce Pell governance, implementation oversight, and partner alignment activities	Statewide governance meetings, implementation coordination processes, and partner alignment structures operational across the consortium	Lead: AccelerateMS; Support: NWCC, MCCB, MDES, NSPARC, Participating Colleges	Y1 M1	Y1 M6- ongoing through grant conclusion
Align Workforce Pell-aligned programs with ETPL requirements, WIOA priorities, and workforce system partner roles	Workforce Pell and ETPL requirements integrated into program design and statewide reporting processes	Lead: MDES; Support: AccelerateMS, MCCB, Participating Colleges	Y1 M3	Y1 M8 - Y2 M12
Implement statewide institutional technology modernization strategy for Workforce Pell participant tracking and financial aid integration	Participating colleges complete initial SIS, workforce training, and reporting system modernization activities	Lead: Participating Colleges; Support: Technical Coordinator, MCCB, AccelerateMS	Y1 M3	Y2 M12
Establish statewide Workforce Pell technical assistance and implementation support structure	Statewide technical assistance processes and implementation support services operational	Lead: AccelerateMS; Support: Technical Coordinator, MCCB	Y1 M1	Y1 M8- Y2 M12
Standardize Workforce Pell participant-level data	Standardized Workforce Pell participant	Lead: MCCB; Support:	Y1 M3	Y1 M8

CORE ELEMENT 3: Workforce System Integration to Expand Training Options				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
collection and reporting requirements across participating institutions	definitions, data elements, and reporting protocols implemented statewide	AccelerateMS, NSPARC, Participating Colleges		
Integrate Workforce Pell participant-level data into the SLDS through MCCB reporting structures	Workforce Pell participant-level data transmitted into SLDS using standardized reporting processes	Lead: MCCB; Support: NSPARC, Participating Colleges	Y1 M6	Y2 12- Y4 M12
Implement linked education and workforce outcomes measurement processes using MDES wage records and SWIS where available	Workforce Pell participant employment and earnings outcomes linked and validated using wage record matching	Lead: NSPARC; Support: MDES, MCCB	Y1 M9	Y2 M12- Y4 M12
Develop and implement Secure Research Enclave pilot environment for approved workforce and education data analysis	Secure Research Enclave operational for approved partner access and program outcome analysis	Lead: NSPARC; Support: MCCB, AccelerateMS, Participating Colleges	Y1 M9	Y3 M6
Implement referral, co-enrollment, and workforce system coordination processes through WIN Job Centers and workforce partners	Workforce system referral and participant coordination processes operational statewide	Lead: MDES; Support: WIN Job Centers, Participating Colleges, LWDAs	Y1 M6	Y2 M12
Expand participant access to Workforce Pell-aligned training through coordinated workforce and education services	Recruitment, referral, and participant support services are operational across all targeted LWDAs	Lead: Participating Colleges; Support: WIN Job Centers, Workforce Partners, AccelerateMS	Y1 M6	Y1 M12- Y4 M12
Submit Workforce Pell-aligned programs for ETPL approval and maintain ongoing reporting compliance	Workforce Pell-aligned programs submitted for ETPL approval and maintained in active ETPL status	Lead: Participating Colleges; Support: MDES, MCCB, AccelerateMS	Y1 M12	Y2 M12- Y4 M12

PARTICIPANT TRACKING. *See Section IV.C.2.ii. Participant Tracking Plan. Note: Grantees are expected to start enrolling participants in programs seeking Workforce Pell eligibility by at least month 12, with consideration of academic calendars, though sooner is preferred.*				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
Establish statewide Workforce Pell participant tracking governance and reporting structure	Standardized participant definitions, data elements, and reporting protocols adopted across participating institutions	Lead: MCCB; Support: AccelerateMS, NSPARC, Participating Colleges	Y1 M1	Y1 M8
Hire or assign statewide and institutional data and reporting personnel	Project Data and Performance Manager Hired; roles operational statewide	Lead: NWCC; Support: AccelerateMS, Participating Colleges	Y1 M1	Y1 M8
Pilot Workforce Pell participant data collection and validation procedures	Workforce Pell participant data collection and reporting systems tested and validated	Lead: Data and Performance Manager; Support: Participating Colleges, NSPARC	Y1 M6	Y1 M12
Implement participant intake and enrollment tracking for Workforce Pell-aligned programs	Participant tracking initiated for Workforce Pell-aligned programs across participating colleges	Lead: Participating Colleges; Support: MCCB, AccelerateMS	Y1 M12	Y1 M12; each subsequent enrollment cycle
Conduct quarterly participant data quality and validation reviews	Participant data validated and finalized for quarterly WIPS and performance reporting	Lead: Data and Performance Manager; Support: Participating Colleges, MCCB	Y1 M12	Y4 M12
Implement participant employment and earnings outcome matching using workforce data	Employment and earnings outcome data integrated into statewide Workforce Pell reporting processes	Lead: NSPARC; Support: MDES, MCCB	Y2 M1	Y4 M12

DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION. *See Section III.G.4 Third-Party Evaluation. Note: Due Dates for some Third-Party Developmental Evaluation Milestones are set by the FOA*				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
Develop a detailed procurement work plan to procure a third-party evaluator for a developmental evaluation	Detailed procurement work plan submission	Lead: NWCC	Y1 M1	Y1 M1

DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION. *See Section III.G.4 Third-Party Evaluation. Note: Due Dates for some Third-Party Developmental Evaluation Milestones are set by the FOA*				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
Procure third-party evaluator for a developmental evaluation.	Third-party evaluator under contract	Lead: NWCC; Support: AccelerateMS	Y1 M2	Y1 M6
Develop a Draft Detailed Evaluation Design from the evaluator, using guidance provided by the Department.	Draft evaluation design submitted	Lead: Third-Party Evaluator; Support: NWCC, AccelerateMS	Y1 M6	Y1 M9
Finalize Detailed Evaluation Design in collaboration with developmental evaluator.	Final evaluation design submitted	Lead: Third-Party Evaluator; Support: NWCC, AccelerateMS	Y1 M9	Y1 M12
Conduct ongoing Developmental Evaluation Activities	Evaluation activities conducted continuously throughout grant period	Lead: Third-Party Evaluator	Y1 M6	Y4 M12
Prepare the evaluator's Interim Developmental Evaluation Report to the grantee's Federal Project Officer (FPO) and Program Office using the suggested format or similar layout, provided after grant award.	Interim Developmental Evaluation Report Submission to the grantee's Federal Project Officer (FPO) and Program Office	Lead: Third-Party Evaluator; Support: NWCC, AccelerateMS	Y1 M6	Y2 M3
Prepare the evaluator's Final Developmental Evaluation Report using the suggested format or similar layout.	Final Developmental Evaluation Report using the suggested format or similar layout.	Lead: Third-Party Evaluator	Y3 M3	Y4 M12

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER) CONTENT DEVELOPMENT & POSTING *See Section III.G.3. OER. Note: Due Dates for some OER Content Development and Posting Milestones are set by the FOA*				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
Identify and/or adapt high-value materials for licensing and public posting as OER with a specific focus on curriculum and supporting materials that would allow another individual to successfully use the curriculum.	List of grant-funded materials identified for OER development and submission to Federal Project Officer (FPO)	Lead: Accelerate MS (Statewide Coordinator); Support: Participating Colleges	Y1 M9	Y2 M6
Create a plan (OER Plan) that details the process that will be	OER Plan submitted to Federal Project	Lead: Accelerate MS; Support:	Y1 M6	Y1 M12

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER) CONTENT DEVELOPMENT & POSTING *See Section III.G.3. OER. Note: Due Dates for some OER Content Development and Posting Milestones are set by the FOA*				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
used to mark materials as openly licensed and prepare materials for public posting as open educational resources ready for use by others, including the repository you will use for this purpose.	Officer (FPO) and Program Office	Participating Colleges		
Implement OER Plan	Workforce Pell-aligned OER materials publicly posted and submission of posting information provided to FPO and Program Office	Lead: AccelerateMS; Support: Participating Colleges, NWCC	Y2 M6	Y3 M12

LINKED OPEN DATA ON CREDENTIALS (Credential Transparency) *See Section VIII.A.7 Credential Transparency. Note: Due dates for some Credential Transparency milestones are set by the FOA.*				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
Determine credentials to be developed, enhanced, or delivered through grant funding (including but not limited to certificates, certifications, apprenticeships, licenses, and degrees of all levels and types)	Linked Open Data on Credentials implementation plan submission that details the process that will be used to fulfill the credential transparency requirement	Lead: AccelerateMS (Statewide Coordinator); Support: MSBA WorkFuture Institute, Employers, Participating Colleges, NSPARC	Y1 M6	Y2 M6
Develop statewide credential transparency specifications aligned with Workforce Pell pathways and skills-based hiring strategies	Credential transparency data specifications and credential descriptions aligned with DOL requirements	Lead: AccelerateMS; Support: MSBA WorkFuture Institute, Employers, NSPARC, Participating Colleges	Y1 M12	Y2 M6
Implement Linked Open Data on Credentials Plan including finalized credential	Workforce Pell-aligned credentials published in	Lead: AccelerateMS; Support: MCCB,	Y2 M6	Y3 M12

LINKED OPEN DATA ON CREDENTIALS (Credential Transparency) *See Section VIII.A.7 Credential Transparency. Note: Due dates for some Credential Transparency milestones are set by the FOA.*				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
transparency description language specifications complete and in-line with DOL requirements	alignment with DOL credential transparency requirements	Participating Colleges, NSPARC		

GRANT-FUNDED SPECIAL PURPOSE EQUIPMENT. *Section III.B.4. Allowable Activities*				
Implementation Step	**Milestone**	**Responsible Party(ies)**	**Start Date**	**Completion Date**
Complete written requests for approval of grant-funded special purpose equipment and/or minor space alterations, if applicable	Written approval requests submitted to Federal Project Officer (FPO), if required	Lead: NWCC; Support: AccelerateMS; Colleges will submit to Accelerate MS, which will then submit to NWCC, which will submit to FPO	Y1 M1	Y1 M6
Procure and implement approved grant-funded special purpose equipment and/or minor space alterations	Approved equipment operational and/or space alterations completed and in use for grant activities	Lead: Participating Colleges; Support: Accelerate MS; Contracted Technical Coordinator	Y1 M6	Y2 M6

Third-Party Evaluation Procurement Plan

Northwest Mississippi Community College (NWCC), as Lead Applicant and fiscal agent for *Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways Initiative*, will procure a third-party evaluator through a competitive process consistent with federal requirements (2 CFR 200.320), State of Mississippi procurement law, and NWCC institutional procurement policies. The evaluator will conduct a developmental evaluation focused on implementation, system alignment, and outcomes across the *Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways Initiative* consortium, consistent with SCC6 requirements.

1. Evaluator Qualifications and Independence

The third-party evaluator or evaluation team will:

- Demonstrate prior experience evaluating large-scale federal workforce or education initiatives, including projects funded by the U.S. Department of Labor or U.S. Department of Education
- Demonstrate experience conducting developmental or implementation-focused evaluations, particularly those involving system change and multi-institutional coordination
- Have the capacity to assess program design, employer alignment, and outcomes within a statewide initiative involving multiple community colleges and workforce system partners
- Have no affiliation with the development of this proposal and will not be involved in the implementation or management of the project
- Have no financial interest in the outcomes of the evaluation

2. Procurement Responsibility and Oversight

As lead applicant and fiscal agent, NWCC will be responsible for procuring the third-party evaluator. Procurement will be conducted in accordance with:

- Federal procurement requirements under 2 CFR 200.320
- Applicable State of Mississippi procurement laws
- NWCC institutional procurement policies and procedures

Given the anticipated cost of the evaluation, NWCC expects to utilize procurement procedures consistent with “small purchase” or competitive proposal methods under 2 CFR 200.320, requiring price or rate quotations from an adequate number of qualified sources. Oversight of the procurement process will be managed by NWCC’s Grants Office and Procurement Office, with

appropriate internal review and approval prior to contract execution. All procurement actions will be documented to ensure compliance with federal, state, and institutional requirements.

3. Procurement Process

NWCC will conduct a competitive procurement process to identify and select a qualified evaluator.

3.1. Solicitation Development and Release

NWCC will develop and issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) outlining:

- Project scope and structure, including the four-pillar implementation model
- Evaluation expectations and required deliverables
- Required qualifications and experience
- Data access, reporting requirements, and stakeholder engagement expectations

The RFP will be publicly posted and/or distributed to qualified evaluation firms in accordance with procurement requirements.

3.2. Proposal Review and Selection

Following receipt of proposals, NWCC will convene a review committee composed of representatives from key stakeholder groups, including:

- Northwest Mississippi Community College (Lead Applicant)
- Accelerate Mississippi
- Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB)

The committee will evaluate proposals using defined criteria, including:

- Relevant evaluation experience
- Demonstrated capacity to conduct developmental evaluation
- Experience with multi-partner or statewide initiatives
- Approach to evaluating workforce system integration and employer engagement
- Approach to working with project stakeholders and data systems

Proposals will be reviewed and scored using a standardized evaluation rubric. Documentation of the review process, scoring, and selection rationale will be maintained in accordance with NWCC procurement policies. The review committee will recommend a selected evaluator to project leadership for final approval.

4. Procurement Timeline

NWCC will implement a procurement process that ensures selection and engagement of a qualified evaluator within SCC6-required timelines.

- Initiate procurement process: Months 1–2; Develop and release RFP, including scope of work and evaluation expectations
- Proposal review and selection: Months 3–5; Convene review committee, evaluate proposals, and select evaluator
- Contract execution: No later than Month 6; Execute contract with selected evaluator

Following procurement, NWCC will coordinate with the selected evaluator to meet all required evaluation milestones:

- Draft Evaluation Design: No later than Month 9
- Final Evaluation Design: No later than Month 12

The evaluator will conduct ongoing evaluation activities throughout the grant period, including submission of an interim report by Month 27 and a final report by Month 48, in accordance with U.S. Department of Labor requirements. This timeline aligns with SCC6 expectations and ensures that evaluation activities are integrated early in project implementation.

5. Evaluation Scope and Project Alignment

The evaluator will conduct a developmental evaluation that documents implementation and supports continuous improvement of *Mississippi Workforce Pell Systems and Pathways* Initiative. The evaluation will focus on:

- Development and scaling of Workforce Pell–aligned programs
- Employer engagement, including program design and validation process
- Integration and use of statewide data systems, including NSPARC, Community College Student Information Systems, and MDES wage records
- Coordination across institutions, MCBB, and workforce system partners
- Participant outcomes, including completion, credential attainment, employment, and wage progression

The evaluator will provide ongoing feedback to support program refinement, system alignment, and performance improvement.

6. Stakeholder Engagement

Project leadership, in coordination with NWCC's grants and procurement offices, will manage the procurement process and support evaluator engagement. The evaluator will work collaboratively with:

- NWCC (Lead Applicant)
- Accelerate Mississippi (Coordinating Entity)
- MCCB
- All 15 Community Colleges
- State partners (MDES, NSPARC, LWDA's and workforce boards)

to ensure access to relevant data, project activities, and stakeholders necessary to conduct the evaluation.