



**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**34 CFR Part 75**

[Docket ID ED-2025-OS-0679]

**Final Priority and Definitions—Secretary's Supplemental Priority and Definitions on Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness**

**AGENCY:** U.S. Department of Education.

**ACTION:** Final priority and definitions.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Education (Department) announces a final priority and definitions for use in currently authorized discretionary grant programs or programs that may be authorized in the future. The Secretary may choose to use the entire priority for a grant program or a particular competition or use one or more of the priority's component parts. This priority and definitions augment the initial set of three Secretary's Supplemental Priorities on Evidence-Based Literacy, Educational Choice, and Returning Education to the States published as final priorities on September 9, 2025; the additional Secretary's Supplemental Priorities on Meaningful Learning Opportunities, published as a final priority on February 12, 2026, and Advancing Artificial Intelligence in Education, published as a final priority elsewhere in this issue of the *Federal Register*; and the additional proposed Secretary's Supplemental

Priority on Promoting Patriotic Education published as a proposed priority on September 17, 2025.

**DATES:** The final priority and definitions are effective [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Zachary Rogers, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW., Room 7W213, Washington, DC 20202-6450. Telephone: (202) 260-1144. Email: SSP@ed.gov.

If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability and wish to access telecommunications relay services, please dial 7-1-1.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

*Purpose of this Regulatory Action:* On September 25, 2025, the Department published a notice of a proposed supplemental priority and definitions (NPP) in the *Federal Register* (90 FR 46111). This final priority and definitions may be used across the Department's discretionary grant programs.

*Summary of the Major Provisions of This Regulatory Action:* Through this regulatory action, we establish one supplemental priority and associated definitions. Each major provision is discussed in the *Public Comment* section of this document.

The NPP contained background information and our reasons for proposing the priority and definitions. The

Department describes the differences between the proposed priority and definitions and those established as final in this notice of final priority and definitions (NFP), as discussed in the *Analysis of Comments and Changes* section in this document.

*Program Authority:* 20 U.S.C. 1221e-3, 3474.

*Public Comment:* In response to our invitation in the NPP, the Department received comments from 176 commenters on the proposed priority and definitions.

Generally, we do not address technical and other minor changes or suggested changes that the law does not authorize us to make under applicable statutory authority. In addition, we do not address general comments regarding concerns not directly related to the proposed priority or definitions.

*Analysis of Comments and Changes:* An analysis of the comments and of any changes in the priority and definitions since publication of the NPP follows.

#### *GENERAL COMMENTS*

*Comments:* Many commenters expressed general support for the proposed priority on Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness. Commenters indicated that the priority addresses timely workforce challenges and reflects the need for stronger alignment between education and employment systems. Several commenters stated that the priority appropriately emphasizes preparation for careers in a

changing economy and supports learners in developing skills relevant to current labor market needs. Some commenters noted that the priority aligns with existing best practices in education, workforce development, and career-connected learning, while others expressed appreciation for the Department's focus on employable skills, career exploration, and pathways to high wages.

Several commenters also indicated that the priority complements ongoing federal, state, and local workforce initiatives and could strengthen coordination across education and workforce systems. These commenters supported the Department's approach and encouraged its implementation.

#### Analysis:

We appreciate the commenters' general support for the Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness priority. The comments reflect broad agreement that the priority addresses critical workforce needs and aligns with current practices in the field. Commenters' support affirms the importance of connecting education to labor market needs and preparing individuals to succeed in an evolving economy. The Department recognizes that the priority's emphasis on career connected learning and workforce readiness is responsive to stakeholder input and consistent with the goals of strengthening economic opportunity and workforce participation. We appreciate the input and

general support from these commenters.

Changes: None.

Comments:

Many commenters urged the Department to explicitly name adult learners in the Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness priority. Commenters emphasized that workforce challenges extend beyond the K-12 system and that working-age adults represent a critical segment of the current and near-term labor force. Several commenters noted that limiting eligibility or emphasis to K-12 students would exclude millions of adults who are motivated to work but lack foundational skills or credentials. A few commenters described the broader economic and social impacts of adult education, including increased earnings, reduced reliance on public assistance, improved family stability, and intergenerational benefits. Several commenters shared examples of adult learners earning credentials, securing employment, and supporting their families more effectively because of adult education programs.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' strong and consistent support for the inclusion of adult learners. The comments demonstrate broad agreement that workforce readiness initiatives should address the needs of working age adults. Commenters provided evidence through anecdotes focused on students with whom they had worked to indicate that adult education

programs function as essential onramps to employment, postsecondary education, and training. The Department recognizes that including adult learners aligns with the stated purpose of preparing individuals to thrive in a dynamic and evolving economy.

Changes: We are revising the priority to add adult learners in part 4 to ensure that adult learners can benefit from the opportunities included within this priority, and the definition of talent marketplace, subpart (c) refers to students as learners to include both youth and adults.

Comments:

Many commenters emphasized that literacy, numeracy, digital skills, problem-solving, and critical thinking are foundational to workforce readiness. Commenters were concerned about and cautioned against defining program success solely by short-term employment outcomes, noting that such an approach risks placing learners into low-wage jobs without long-term mobility. Several commenters stressed that educational skill gains should remain a required and measurable outcome within career pathway initiatives.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' emphasis on foundational skills as the basis for sustained employment and career advancement. The comments reflect a shared understanding that workforce readiness depends on more than technical

training alone and that strong educational foundations enable individuals to adapt to the evolving workforce. The Department acknowledges that maintaining a focus on educational skill development supports long-term economic mobility and aligns with the goals of career pathway models. We believe that while this is deeply relevant to this content, the priority captures the intent of these comments and additional language based on the recommendation is not needed.

Changes: None

Comments:

Numerous commenters highlighted apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, and other work-based learning models as effective mechanisms for connecting education to employment. Commenters shared that these experiences allow learners to apply academic skills in real world settings while developing skills that make learners more employable. Those commenters emphasized that those work-based learning opportunities should be paid and offered with flexible scheduling to accommodate adult learners balancing work, family, and educational responsibilities. The commenters also encouraged clearer alignment between pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships. One commenter recommended a focus on apprenticeships for teachers to support State and local workforce systems. The commenter highlighted various teacher shortage areas, like

special education, and saw apprenticeships as a tool to prepare teachers, especially instructional assistants, career changes, and other individuals.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' support for work-based learning as a component of effective career pathways. The comments highlight the importance of designing these opportunities in ways that are supportive of all learners, including those with financial and scheduling constraints. The Department agrees with the importance of creating paid work based learning opportunities and recognizes that intentional alignment between education, training, and employment can strengthen workforce readiness and improve learner outcomes; including via paid opportunities for learners. The Department also acknowledges the effectiveness of teacher apprenticeship programs as a mechanism for preparing educators and addressing a workforce shortage area.

Changes: In order to address these comments around the importance of paid opportunities for learners, specifically educator apprenticeships, we have added a new subpart (e) to the priority to provide intentional focus on the inclusion of paid apprenticeships for educators.

Comments:

Many commenters cited persistent workforce shortages across multiple industries and reported that employers struggle to

find workers with appropriate skills, citing skills gaps as the reason for the workforce shortages, rather than a lack of interested potential workers. Several commenters described the desire for education programs that collaborate directly with employers to align instruction with labor market needs.

**Analysis:**

We appreciate commenters' insights regarding labor market conditions and employer demand. The comments illustrate a clear connection between workforce shortages and gaps in education and training. The Department acknowledges that career pathways and workforce readiness initiatives should be informed by labor market data and employer engagement while ensuring that learners gain transferable skills that support long-term adaptability. We believe these elements are already permitted within the language of the priority and decline to make changes.

**Changes:** None

**Comments:**

Some commenters raised concerns related to access, particularly concerning adult learners who are low income, or who have limited English proficiency, prior educational disruption, or lack of digital access. Commenters stressed the importance of providing access to devices, broadband, and digital literacy instruction to said adult learners to decrease any access gaps. Several commenters cautioned that

without intentional design, career pathway initiatives could exclude the learners most in need.

Analysis:

We appreciate the commenters' focus on access. The comments highlight the importance of designing education and workforce programs that are accessible for all participants. The Department recognizes that supportive program design and attention to digital access are essential to ensuring that career pathways support all learners and contribute to broader economic participation and, if authorized by program statute, such design may be included in their project submissions to grant competitions.

Changes: None

Comments:

A couple of commenters emphasized the importance of flexibility and learner choice within career pathways. These commenters cautioned against approaches that pressure learners into specific pathways or discourage postsecondary education options. Commenters advocated for pathways that allow individuals to pursue careers aligned with their interests, strengths, and long-term goals.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' emphasis on learner-centered approaches. The comments highlight the importance of offering flexible pathways for learners. The Department

recognizes that flexible, choice-driven pathways can better support learner engagement and long-term success. We believe that the priority captures the intent of these comments and that additional language based on the recommendation is not needed.

Changes: None

Comments:

One commenter wrote with concern about the finality of the priority and asked the Department not to finalize the priority until it (1) completes a meaningful regulatory impact review under Executive Orders 12866 and 14094; (2) conducts or properly certifies a Regulatory Flexibility Act analysis; (3) identifies and seeks Paperwork Reduction Act clearance for new information collection burdens the proposal would create; and (4) clarifies our Unfunded Mandates Reform Act determination. The commenter also requested information about programs likely to use the supplemental priority and definitions in FY 2026 - 2028 as well as information on the estimated number of applicants and awards per program.

Analysis: We appreciate the commenter's review of the proposed priority and their attention to statutory requirements and direction of certain Executive Orders. While each of the laws and Executive Order are relevant to the work of Federal agencies, for this public comment, they would not be evaluated against the substance of the

priority. On January 20, 2025, Executive Order 14094 was rescinded, and its direction is not in effect. The Department continues to conduct analysis pursuant to Executive Order 12866; see the regulatory impact analysis section below. The Regulatory Impact Analysis section of the Notice of Proposed Priority explains that this priority is not a significant regulatory action under section 3(f) of Executive Order 12866 and that application submission and participation in competitive grant programs that might use this proposed priority and definitions is voluntary. Pursuant to the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995, agencies must assess the effects of Federal regulatory actions and whether the action imposes an enforceable duty upon State, local, or Tribal governments, or imposes a duty upon the private sector. Based on the analysis above, the Departments concluded there are no unfunded Federal mandates, as defined in 2 U.S.C. 658(6). We believe, based on the Department's administrative experience, that entities preparing an application would not need to expend more resources than they otherwise would have in the absence of this proposed priority. Therefore, any potential costs to applicants would be de minimis. Paperwork Reduction Act clearance requirements would be determined if this priority is used in a grant competition, specifically in relation to the program's grant application package. The Department does not believe changes are necessary. For

further information about programs that use the supplemental priority and definitions in FY 2026 - 2028 as well as information on the number of applicants and awards per program, we would recommend setting up an alert in the Federal Register at <https://www.federalregister.gov/agencies/education-department> to receive updates on all grant opportunities.

Change: None

*Priority Element Comments*

Comments:

A few commenters supported activities aligned to State and local workforce priorities and emphasized the importance of tailoring workforce development efforts to regional labor market needs. Commenters noted that States are best positioned to identify priority industries and occupations and encouraged the Department to preserve flexibility for State and local implementation. Some commenters recommended clearer guidance on how States should demonstrate alignment with labor market data and workforce plans.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' support for aligning workforce development activities with State and local priorities. The comments reflect broad agreement that locally informed approaches strengthen workforce relevance and effectiveness. The Department recognizes the importance of allowing States flexibility to respond to regional economic

conditions while aligning activities with workforce demand. We agree with the commenters that States are best positioned to identify priority industries and occupations and believe the priority as written provides such flexibility.

Changes: None

Comments:

Several commenters supported cross-agency alignment among State education, higher education, workforce, vocational rehabilitation, and related agencies. Commenters emphasized that coordination reduces duplication, improves service delivery, and strengthens career pathways. Some commenters recommended explicit encouragement of shared data systems and joint planning processes.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' strong support for alignment across State agencies that support workforce development. The comments underscore the value of coordinated service delivery and shared accountability. The Department recognizes that cross-agency collaboration can improve outcomes for learners and jobseekers.

Some commenters recommended explicit encouragement of shared data systems and joint planning processes. The Department appreciates these suggestions and agrees that shared data infrastructure and coordinated planning can be valuable tools for strengthening collaboration and

improving transparency and outcomes. However, we decline to make changes to the priority in response to these comments. The Department believes the current language already provides sufficient flexibility for States to implement shared data systems and joint planning processes in a manner that best reflects their governance structures, statutory authorities, and local needs. Maintaining this flexibility allows States to pursue alignment strategies that are most effective within their specific contexts while continuing to advance the goals of coordinated service delivery and shared accountability.

Changes: None

Comments:

Many commenters supported activities that help States identify and regularly re-evaluate lists of in-demand and high-value industry-recognized credentials. Commenters emphasized that credential lists must remain current and responsive to labor market changes. The commenters recommended that States engage employers and utilize sector partnerships in credential validation processes. A small number of commenters cautioned against overemphasis on short-term credentials without clear labor market value.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' support for maintaining current and relevant credential lists. The comments highlight the importance of employer engagement and data-informed

decision-making in credential identification. The Department recognizes the need to balance responsiveness to labor market demand with credential quality and portability and believes this can be done within the current language of the priority.

Changes: None

Comments:

A few commenters expressed support for increased attention to skilled trades, noting strong demand and clear pathways to high wages. Commenters highlighted construction, manufacturing, and infrastructure-related trades as areas of need. Some commenters recommended elevating skilled trades alongside postsecondary degree pathways to reduce stigma and increase participation.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' support for skilled trades as an essential component of workforce development. The comments reflect recognition of the role skilled trades play in economic growth and infrastructure development. The Department acknowledges the importance of promoting multiple high-quality pathways to employment. We believe that the priority as proposed captures the intent of the comment and therefore, we decline to include additional language within the priority.

Changes: None

Comments:

A few commenters supported industry-led sector partnerships as a mechanism for aligning education and training with employer needs. Commenters emphasized that employer leadership helps ensure relevance and sustainability. Some commenters recommended including labor organizations and community-based partners in sector partnerships to support access.

**Analysis:**

We appreciate commenters' support for industry-led sector partnerships. The comments highlight the value of employer engagement and collaborative approaches to workforce development. The Department recognizes that inclusive partnerships can strengthen alignment and improve outcomes. We believe that the priority as proposed captures the intent of the comment and therefore, we decline to include additional language within the priority.

**Changes:** None

**Comments:**

Some commenters emphasized that credentials should lead to economic self-sufficiency and advancement and recommended measuring success not only by attainment, but also by employment and wage outcomes. A commenter observed that the recently authorized Workforce Pell Grants will expand access to affordable short-term programs that could lead to high-wage employment outcomes.

**Analysis:**

We appreciate commenters' support for credential attainment aligned with labor market needs. The comments reflect a shared understanding that credentials are most valuable when they lead to meaningful employment and advancement. The Department recognizes the importance of aligning credential attainment with workforce outcomes and uses performance measures, at the programmatic level, to assess the attainment of those outcomes. We also agree with the commenter who highlighted the potential for Workforce Pell Grants to increase access to high-value short-term programs aligned to workforce demand. We further believe that supporting the development of such programs that are aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations in their States, strengthens the connection in this priority between credential attainment and labor market outcomes.

Changes: We added new subparts (ix) and (x) to enable the Department to support grantees in the development or expansion of short-term programs that meet Workforce Pell Grant requirements.

Comments:

One commenter gave their support for the priority and requested that the Department pay more attention to helping talented students, especially those with special skills in areas like technology, design, or leadership. The commenter also noted that many of those particular students do not

get the support or opportunities they need to reach their full potential. The recommendation highlighted that this may be done by adding priorities that offer mentorships, and making sure students have the opportunity to grow their abilities and succeed in future careers.

Analysis: We appreciate the commenter's support for the priority and agree that all students should have the opportunity to reach their potential through multiple pathways. We agree that mentorship, similar to internships, externships, and apprenticeships, provides such opportunities.

Changes: In order to incorporate the value of mentorships within the priority, we have edited subpart (a)(vii) to include mentorship as one of the options within work-based learning.

Comments:

Some commenters emphasized that compensation or academic credit should be essential for access and participation, particularly for adult learners and low-income students. Commenters expressed support for paid work-based learning opportunities, including internships, externships, pre-apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeships.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' strong support for paid work-based learning opportunities. The comments underscore the importance of access to experiential learning. The

Department recognizes that compensated work-based learning can strengthen career readiness while reducing barriers to participation. We believe that the priority as proposed captures the intent of the comment and therefore, we decline to include additional language within the priority.

Changes: None

Comments: Multiple commenters encouraged expanding apprenticeships beyond youth participation, with one commenter recommending a focus on apprenticeships to prepare individuals to become teachers, especially to support instructional assistants, career changers, and others already working in education in this effort.

Analysis: The Department appreciates the value commenters place on apprenticeships. The Department recognizes that apprenticeships can be useful for all age groups and agrees that apprenticeship programs to prepare educators can be a beneficial approach to teacher preparation. As such, we added a new paragraph to the priority that focuses on teacher apprenticeships.

Changes: We added a new paragraph (e) to the priority on teacher apprenticeships.

Comments:

Several commenters supported the use of apprenticeship intermediaries to expand and manage apprenticeship programs. Commenters noted that intermediaries can reduce administrative burden and increase employer participation.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' support for apprenticeship intermediaries. The comments highlight the need to build State and employer capacity to implement apprenticeships effectively. We believe that the priority as proposed captures the intent of the comment and therefore, we decline to include additional language within the priority.

Changes: None.

Comments:

Multiple commenters supported the creation of pre-apprenticeships as onramps to registered apprenticeships. Commenters emphasized their value for populations lacking prior exposure or prerequisites. Additionally, some commenters supported the creation of new registered apprenticeships, including those serving in-school and out-of-school youth and encouraged expansion into nontraditional sectors.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' support for pre-apprenticeships as preparatory pathways. The priority as proposed includes several components highlighting pre-apprenticeships. Therefore, we decline to make additional changes to the proposed priority.

Changes: None

Comments:

A commenter recommended technical assistance to help States

develop and scale apprenticeships. Commenters noted variation in State capacity and experience.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' recommendations regarding technical assistance. The Department recognizes that capacity-building can support effective and supportive implementation and believes this can be done within the context of the current language of the priority.

Changes: None

Comments:

Many commenters supported providing career and college exploration and advising opportunities to increase awareness of postsecondary and career options. Commenters noted that exposure to a broad range of career pathways helps learners make informed decisions and reduces misalignment between education and employment. Several commenters emphasized the importance of beginning career exploration early and continuing it through adult learning. Those commenters recommended that the advising opportunities should be grounded in labor market information and be accessible to learners with varying levels of educational attainment.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' support for career and college exploration and advising. The comments reflect broad agreement that informed decision-making is essential to

learner success and workforce alignment. The priority as proposed in subpart 4(b) includes language that supports this, and we therefore decline to make additional changes to the priority.

Changes: None

Comments:

A few commenters addressed the provision of financial tools to help learners compare the costs and benefits of educational and career pathways and noted that transparent information about tuition, student loan debt, and earnings outcomes can help learners make more informed choices and reduce the risk of unsustainable debt.

Several commenters stated financial tools present earnings data clearly and include information relevant to adult learners and first-generation students and cautioned that earnings data should be contextualized to avoid oversimplification.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' support for tools that promote transparency regarding educational costs and labor market outcomes. The comments underscore the importance of helping learners understand the long-term financial implications of postsecondary and career decisions. The Department recognizes that accessible and accurate financial information can support informed decision-making and financial security, and applicants can include activities

relating to this in project proposals if authorized in program statute.

Changes: None

Comments:

A few commenters supported the development of talent marketplaces that connect employers, students, and jobseekers through digital tools. Commenters noted that talent marketplaces could improve alignment between education and workforce needs by translating credentials, learning experiences, and job requirements into discrete competencies. Several commenters also emphasized the potential of these systems to support skills-based hiring and improve transparency in credential value.

Analysis:

We appreciate commenters' support for talent marketplaces as a strategy to strengthen connections among learners, employers, and education and training providers. The Department recognizes the potential of digital infrastructure to support skills matching and improve workforce alignment. We believe these elements are included within the language of the priority and decline to make changes.

Changes: None

Comments:

Some commenters specifically supported credential registries as a component of talent marketplaces.

Commenters noted that centralized, State-maintained registries could improve transparency and help learners and employers understand credential value and recommended ensuring communication across systems and minimizing administrative burden for providers.

**Analysis:**

We appreciate commenters' support for credential registries. The Department recognizes that transparent and interoperable registries can support informed decision-making and alignment with labor market needs. We believe these elements are included within the language of the priority and decline to make changes.

Changes: None

***FINAL PRIORITY:***

The Department establishes the following priority for use in any Department discretionary grant program.

***Priority:***

Projects or proposals that are designed to do one or more of the following:

(a) Support workforce development programs that are aligned with State priorities. This includes one or more of the following:

(i) Coordinating activities to local workforce priorities.

(ii) Activities that support alignment of workforce activities across State agencies that support workforce

development (e.g., education, higher education, workforce transformation, job and family services, vocational rehabilitation services including pre-employment transition services and transition services).

(iii) Activities that support States in identifying in-demand and high-value industry-recognized credentials and/or re-evaluating existing lists of credentials.

(iv) Providing support for the skilled trades.

(v) Developing industry-led sector partnerships.

(vi) Promoting the attainment by individuals of an in-demand and high-value industry-recognized postsecondary credential.

(vii) Providing work-based learning opportunities (e.g., internships, externships, pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, and mentorships) for which a student may receive wages and/or academic credit.

(viii) Expanding the availability of pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships, including through dual or concurrent enrollment (as defined in 20 U.S.C. 7801(15)), by doing one or more of the following:

(1) Supporting apprenticeship intermediaries.

(2) Creating pre-apprenticeships.

(3) Creating new registered apprenticeships to include apprenticeships for in-school and out-of-school youth.

(4) Providing technical assistance for States to create new registered apprenticeships to include

apprenticeships for in-school and out-of-school youth, as well as adult learners.

(ix) Supporting the development of new high-quality, short-term programs that meet the eligibility requirements of the Workforce Pell Grants program in Section 83002(b) of the Working Families Tax Cut Act (P.L. 119-21), including program length requirements and alignment with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations, as determined by the Governor in the state where the project is located

(x) Supporting the expansion of high-quality, short-term programs that meet the eligibility requirements of the Workforce Pell Grants program in Section 83002(b) of the Working Families Tax Cut Act (P.L. 119-21), including program length requirements and alignment with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations, as determined by the Governor in the state where the project is located.

(b) Provide career and/or college exploration and advising opportunities to promote greater awareness of the range of postsecondary educational and career options.

(c) Provide opportunities for students to use financial tools to compare the cost and benefits of the career options and educational pathways they are considering, including the long-term impact of taking out student loans on their financial security, including likely

entry and mid-career earnings in fields selected by students as compared to entry and mid-career earnings in high-wage, high-growth, and high-demand occupations in each of the career clusters.

(d) Support the development of talent marketplaces (including credential registries, skills-based job description generators, and learning and employment records) that connect employers, students, and jobseekers by converting job descriptions and learning assertions into discrete, industry-recognized competencies.

(e) Prioritize and expand Registered Apprenticeships in education, including Registered Apprenticeships to prepare one or more of the following:

(i) Elementary educators,

(ii) Secondary educators, or

(iii) Special educators, including those serving infants, toddlers, preschoolers, children, or youth with disabilities by including one or more of the following:

(1) Supporting the development and expansion of Registered Apprenticeship programs designed to lead to educator certification.

(2) Creating targeted pathways for instructional assistants, paraprofessionals, substitute teachers, career changers, and other individuals already working in educational settings to earn teaching credentials and to become certified educators while employed.

(3) Aligning secondary and postsecondary educator-registered apprenticeship programs with State educator licensure requirements and workforce shortage areas.

(4) Providing technical assistance to school districts, educator preparation providers, institutions of higher education, and registered apprenticeship intermediaries to establish or expand Registered Educator Apprenticeship programs.

(5) Promoting earn-and-learn models through registered apprenticeships that reduce financial barriers and increase access to the teaching profession, particularly in high-need subject areas, including provision of:

(A) Paid work experience in a full-time position;

(B) A progression of wage increases; and

(C) Coursework that leads to certification,

delivered to accommodate full-time work schedules.

*Types of Priorities:*

When inviting applications for a competition using one or more priorities, we designate the type of each priority as absolute, competitive preference, or invitational through a competition notice. The effect of each type of priority follows:

*Absolute priority:* Under an absolute priority, we consider only applications that meet the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(3)).

*Competitive preference priority:* Under a competitive

preference priority, we give competitive preference to an application by (1) awarding additional points, depending on the extent to which the application meets the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i)); or (2) selecting an application that meets the priority over an application of comparable merit that does not meet the priority (34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(ii)).

*Invitational priority:* Under an invitational priority, we are particularly interested in applications that meet the priority. However, we do not give an application that meets the priority a preference over other applications (34 CFR 75.105(c)(1)).

#### *FINAL DEFINITIONS*

The Secretary establishes the following definitions for use in any Department discretionary grant program in which the final priority is used.

*Credential Registry,* with respect to a component of a Talent Marketplace, means a digital repository and database, maintained by a State or State Workforce Agency, as defined at 29 U.S.C. 3225a(a)(8).

*In-demand Industry Sector or Occupation,* as defined in section 3(23) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), means (i) an industry sector that has a substantial current or potential impact (including through jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement) on the State, regional, or local economy, as appropriate, and that contributes to the

growth or stability of other supporting businesses, or the growth of other industry sectors; or (ii) an occupation that currently has or is projected to have a number of positions (including positions that lead to economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement) in an industry sector so as to have a significant impact on the State, regional, or local economy, as appropriate.

*Learning and Employment Record* - The term "Learning and Employment Record," with respect to a Talent Marketplace, means a digital tool maintained by a State or State Workforce Agency, as defined at 29 U.S.C. 3225a(a)(8).

*Recognized Postsecondary Credential* means credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of an apprenticeship, a license recognized by the State involved or Federal Government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree, as defined in section 3(53) of WIOA.

*Skills-Based Job Description Generator* -The term "Skills-Based Job Description Generator," with respect to a Talent Marketplace, means a digital tool, maintained by a State or a State Workforce Agency, as defined at 29 U.S.C. 3225a(a)(8).

*Talent marketplace* means a digital, interconnected system of technologies maintained by a State or State Workforce Agency, as defined at 29 U.S.C. 3225a(a)(8), that

- (a) is publicly available;
- (b) includes an integrated:
  - (i) Learning and Employment Record;
  - (ii) Credential Registry; and
  - (iii) Skill-Based Job Description generator;
- (c) utilizes artificial intelligence to enable learners and jobseekers, employers, and education and training providers to transform, transcribe, and transact earned learning assertions, job descriptions, and degree and non-degree credentials into discrete competency statements; and
- (d) may be curated into interoperable individual records of achievement and learning and employment recommendations

*Work-based learning* is used in accordance with 20 U.S.C. 2302(55), to mean sustained interactions with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings, to the extent practicable, or simulated environments at an educational institution that foster in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field, that are aligned to curriculum and instruction.

*Regulatory Impact Analysis:* This regulatory action is not a significant regulatory action subject to review by the Office of Management and Budget under section 3(f) of Executive Order 12866. This regulatory action is not

considered an "Executive Order 14192 regulatory action." We have also reviewed this regulatory action under Executive Order 13563. We are issuing the priority and definitions only on a reasoned determination that their benefits would justify their costs. The Department believes that this regulatory action is consistent with the principles in Executive Order 13563. We also have determined that this regulatory action would not unduly interfere with State, local, and Tribal governments in the exercise of their governmental functions. In accordance with these Executive Orders, the Department has assessed the potential costs and benefits, both quantitative and qualitative, of this regulatory action. The potential costs are those resulting from statutory requirements and those we have determined are necessary for administering the Department's programs and activities.

*Discussion of Costs and Benefits:* The priority and definitions would impose no or minimal costs on entities that receive discretionary grant award funds from the Department. Additionally, the benefits of implementing the priority and definitions outweigh any associated costs, to the extent these de minimis costs even exist, because the priority and definitions would result in higher quality grant application submissions. Application submission and participation in competitive grant programs that might use the priority and definitions is voluntary. We believe,

based on the Department's administrative experience, that entities preparing an application would not need to expend more resources than they otherwise would have in the absence of the priority and definitions. Because the costs of carrying out activities would be paid for with program funds, the costs of implementation would not be a burden for any eligible applicants that earn a grant award, including small entities.

*Intergovernmental Review:* This action is subject to Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79. This document provides early notification of our specific plans and actions for this program.

*Regulatory Flexibility Act Certification:* This section considers the effects that the final regulations may have on small entities in the educational sector as required by the Regulatory Flexibility Act, 5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.* The U.S. Small Business Administration Size Standards define proprietary institutions as small businesses if they are independently owned and operated, are not dominant in their field of operation, and have total annual revenue below \$7,000,000. Nonprofit institutions are defined as small entities if they are independently owned and operated and not dominant in their field of operation. Public institutions are defined as small organizations if they are operated by a government overseeing a population below 50,000.

This regulatory action does not impose new reporting requirements or compliance burdens on these entities. Any potential effects are minimal, indirect, or result from voluntary participation in a Federal program. Therefore, the Department concludes that this rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities, in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 605(b).

*Paperwork Reduction Act:* The priority and definitions do not contain information collection requirements or affect currently approved data collections.

*Accessible Format:* On request to the program contact person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**, individuals with disabilities can obtain this document in an accessible format. The Department will provide the requestor with an accessible format that may include Rich Text Format (RTF) or text format (txt), a thumb drive, an MP3 file, braille, large print, audiotape, compact disc, or another accessible format.

*Electronic Access to This Document:* The official version of this document is the document published in the **Federal Register**. You may access the official edition of the **Federal Register** and the Code of Federal Regulations at [www.govinfo.gov](http://www.govinfo.gov). You may also access documents of the Department published in the **Federal Register** by using the article search feature at [www.federalregister.gov](http://www.federalregister.gov).

**Linda McMahon,**  
*Secretary of Education.*

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