

WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §18b-3D-6

§18B-3D-6. Learn and Earn Cooperative Education Program established.

(a) *Legislative findings.*

(1) The Legislature finds that many West Virginians cannot enroll full-time in a community and technical college technical program because circumstances require them to maintain full-time employment. It is critically important that technical programs leading to high-wage occupations be more accessible and affordable for all West Virginians.

(2) The Legislature further finds that cooperative education programs are successful in providing access to these technical programs while providing students enrolled full-time in a community and technical college with the financial benefits they need to continue their education. These cooperative education programs provide opportunities for students to work with West Virginia companies while in college, thus increasing the likelihood that they will complete the program, find gainful employment and choose to remain in West Virginia upon graduation. They provide students with hands-on, real world work experience with a salary while they complete a technical program of study and, at the same time, provide employers with a cost-effective tool for recruiting and training.

(b) The purpose of this section is to establish a cooperative education program, under the jurisdiction of the council, as a component of the Workforce Development Initiative Program established pursuant to this article. The program shall be known and may be cited as the "Learn and Earn Program."

(c) The program requires a dollar-for-dollar cash match from participating employers or groups of employers from which the student receives a salary from the employer or employers while participating in the program. Participants may not substitute a match in-kind for the cash match required by this section.

(d) An institution is eligible to apply for a program grant in cooperation with one or more employer partners if it meets the definition of a community and technical college provided in §18B-1-2 of this code: *Provided, That*, as a pilot program beginning at the start of the 2023-2024 academic year and concluding at the end of the 2025-2026 academic year, Potomac State College of West Virginia University is eligible to participate in the "Learn and Earn Program" established by this section in accordance with the rules promulgated pursuant to §18B-3D-5 of this code. At the conclusion of the pilot program, the council shall determine whether Potomac State College of West Virginia University has achieved sufficient results to continue to participate in the Learn and Earn program. The council shall define the application process in the rules required in section five of this article.

(e) The council may expend funds available through the Workforce Development Initiative program to implement the provisions of this section.