

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 549

BY REPRESENTATIVE BERAULT

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: Creates the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Program

1 AN ACT

2 To enact Chapter 11-E of Title 23 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be  
3 comprised of R.S. 23:1861 through 1866, relative to workforce development; to  
4 create the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Program; to create the Bayou  
5 Growth Opportunity Workforce Fund; to provide for program awards; to provide for  
6 annual reporting; to provide definitions; to provide for enforcement; to provide for  
7 rulemaking; and to provide for related matters.

8 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

9 Section 1. Chapter 11-E of Title 23 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950,  
10 comprised of R.S. 23:1861 through 1866, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

11 CHAPTER 11-E. BAYOU GROWTH OPPORTUNITY WORKFORCE PROGRAM

12 §1861. Definitions

13 For the purpose of this Chapter, the following terms have the meanings  
14 ascribed to them:

15 (1) "Approved plan" means a training plan submitted as provided in R.S.  
16 23:1863 and which is approved by the department.

17 (2) "Awardee" means a qualified employer that is awarded funds in  
18 accordance with R.S. 23:1863.

19 (3) "Department" means Louisiana Works.

1           (4) "Fund" means the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Fund created  
2           in R.S. 23:1862.

3           (5) "Program" means the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Program  
4           established in accordance with R.S. 23:1863.

5           (6) "Qualified employee" means an employee of a qualified employer and  
6           who is a United States citizen or otherwise authorized to work in the United States;  
7           is employed by a qualified employer when training under an approved plan begins;  
8           works primarily in this state and for whom the qualified employer pays all applicable  
9           taxes; and is, as determined by the department, a permanent, full-time employee.

10           (7) "Qualified employer" means an employer that the department determines  
11           has a physical presence in this state and is in compliance with the state's employment  
12           and tax laws.

13           (8) "Qualified training provider" means an entity that is qualified to provide  
14           the training required under an approved plan, as determined by the department. A  
15           qualified training provider shall include but is not limited to any of the following:

16           (a) A community or technical college as designated or provided for in R.S.  
17           17:3217.1.

18           (b) A public postsecondary education institution in accordance with R.S.  
19           17:3351.

20           (c) A licensed proprietary school as defined in R.S. 17:3140.1(6).

21           (d) A private training provider on the department's Qualified Training  
22           Provider list.

23           (e) A registered apprenticeship training center.

24           (f) A qualified employer.

25           (g) A vendor that provides training for the operation of equipment or systems  
26           for which the vendor is the provider.

27           §1862. Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Fund; creation; deposit of money or  
28           other assets; administration; expenditures

1           A. The Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Fund herein referred to as  
2           "the fund" is hereby created within the state treasury.

3           B.(1) The state treasurer may receive money or other assets from any source  
4           for deposit into the fund.

5           (2) The state treasurer shall direct the investment of the fund.

6           (3) The state treasurer shall credit to the fund interest and earnings from fund  
7           investments.

8           C. Money in the fund at the close of the fiscal year shall remain in the fund  
9           and shall not lapse to the general fund.

10          D. The department shall be the administrator of the fund for auditing  
11          purposes.

12          E. The department shall only expend money from the fund, upon  
13          appropriation, for any of the following purposes:

14           (1) The payment of awards to awardees.

15           (2) The administration of the program.

16          §1863. Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Program; creation; awards for  
17          workforce training; application criteria

18          A. The purpose of the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Program  
19          herein referred to as "the program" is to provide competitive awards to qualified  
20          employers for workforce training, including but not limited to talent enhancement,  
21          increasing worker productivity, development of worker skills, leadership and  
22          management training, and worker retention.

23          B. The department shall operate the program and coordinate the  
24          implementation of the program with workforce development boards. The  
25          department and the workforce development boards shall conduct outreach to inform  
26          employers about the program.

27          C.(1) Upon the request of a qualified employer, a workforce development  
28          board staff member shall conduct an evaluation with the employer to determine

1 whether a skills gap exists and if a qualified training provider is available to provide  
2 the instruction needed.

3 (2) The staff member shall identify any federal or other funding sources that  
4 may be obtained for the required training in lieu of an award through the program  
5 before assisting the employer with an application.

6 D.(1) A workforce development board shall submit to the department an  
7 application for a program award on behalf of a qualified employer or on behalf of  
8 two or more qualified employers for a shared training program.

9 (2) The department shall work with the workforce development boards to  
10 create an application for an award.

11 (3) An application developed in accordance with this Section shall include  
12 a requirement that a qualified employer shall submit a training plan.

13 E. The department shall develop criteria to evaluate applications and  
14 proposed training plans and post the criteria on its website. The criteria shall require  
15 that the training plan shall meet, at a minimum, all of the following requirements:

16 (1) Be for no longer than six months in duration, unless the department  
17 determines an extension is appropriate.

18 (2) Conclude within a year after the date the department approves the award,  
19 unless the department determines that an extension is necessary.

20 (3) Be conducted by a qualified training provider.

21 (4) Not be for basic training.

22 (5) Result in a credential for a skill that is transferable and recognized by the  
23 industry.

24 F. The department shall coordinate with the workforce development boards  
25 on the creation of a uniform training agreement to be used by awardees. The  
26 agreement shall include the responsibilities of the awardee and any other  
27 requirements the department considers necessary.

28 G. Any of the following changes made by an awardee to an approved plan  
29 shall not require approval by the department:

1           (1) Changes to the dates of the training, if the new dates will not result in the  
2           training concluding later than a year after the date the department approves the  
3           award.

4           (2) A change in the training provider if the alternate provider is qualified and  
5           the content of the training does not change.

6           (3) Changes to whom the employees will be who receive the training,  
7           provided the employees are qualified.

8           §1864. Program awards; eligible expenses; remittance to department

9           A. Expenses for which program awards shall be used for, include but are not  
10          limited to any of the following:

11          (1) The actual cost of classroom training, including instructor costs and  
12          instructional materials.

13          (2) The actual cost of on-the-job training, including wage reimbursement,  
14          as determined by the department.

15          (3) Other costs determined by the department to be relevant to the training.

16          B. An awardee shall not expend any amount of the program award on any  
17          of the following:

18          (1) Equipment, including tools and computers.

19          (2) Licensing fees.

20          (3) Curriculum development.

21          (4) Qualified employee travel costs.

22          (5) Online training subscriptions.

23          (6) Training that begins before the date of the award, unless approved by the  
24          department.

25          (7) Offsetting tuition reimbursement.

26          C. The amount expended shall not exceed two thousand dollars per qualified  
27          employee or apprentice.

1           D. If less than the full amount of an award is utilized by a qualified  
2           employer, the remaining amount of the award shall be remitted back to the  
3           department and returned to the fund.

4           §1865. Annual report

5           The department shall by March first of each year provide a written report on  
6           the program to the House and Senate committees on labor and industrial relations  
7           and the House Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Finance.

8           The report shall include all of the following information from the immediately  
9           preceding fiscal year:

10           (1) The total amount of funding awarded, organized by industry and region.

11           (2) The total number of applications received and the total number of  
12           applications approved, organized by industry and region.

13           (3) All of the following information for each awardee:

14           (a) The name of the awardee.

15           (b) The amount of the award received by the awardee.

16           (c) The type of training approved for the awardee.

17           (d) The number of qualified employees who completed the approved  
18           training.

19           (4) Any other relevant information, as determined by the department,  
20           including but not limited to all of the following:

21           (a) Total number of individuals hired and trained.

22           (b) Total number of apprenticeships or jobs created.

23           §1866. Rules

24           The department shall enforce this Chapter and may promulgate rules and  
25           regulations in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, R.S. 49:950 et  
26           seq., necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this Chapter.

27           Section 2. The criteria required by the provisions of R.S. 23:1863(E) as enacted by  
28           Section 1 of this Act shall be due beginning no later than July 1, 2028.

1 Section 3. The annual report required by the provisions of R.S. 23:1845 as enacted  
2 by Section 1 of this Act shall begin the March first succeeding July 1, 2028.

3 Section 4. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not  
4 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature  
5 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If  
6 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become  
7 effective on the day following such approval.

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#### DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

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HB 549 Original

2026 Regular Session

Berault

**Abstract:** Creates the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Program.

Proposed law defines "approved plan", "awardee", "department", "fund", "program", "qualified employee", "qualified employer", and "qualified training provider".

Proposed law creates the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Fund (fund) within the state treasury.

Proposed law allows the state treasurer to receive money or other assets from any source for deposit into the fund.

Proposed law requires the state treasurer to credit interest and earnings from fund investments to the fund.

Proposed law requires La. Works to administer the fund for auditing purposes.

Proposed law requires La. Works to expend money from the fund, upon appropriation, for any of the following purposes:

- (1) The payment of awards to awardees.
- (2) The administration of the program.

Proposed law provides for the purpose of the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Program (program).

Proposed law requires the department to operate the program and coordinate the implementation of the program with workforce development boards. Proposed law further requires the department and boards to conduct outreach to inform employers about the program.

Proposed law requires a workforce development board staff member, upon the request of a qualified employer, to conduct an evaluation with the employer to determine whether a skills gap exists and if a qualified training provider is available to provide the instruction needed.

Proposed law requires the staff member to identify any federal or other funding sources that may be obtained for the required training in lieu of an award through the program before the staff member assists the employer with an application.

Proposed law requires a workforce development board to submit to La. Works an application for a program award on behalf of a qualified employer or on behalf of two or more qualified employers for a shared training program.

Proposed law requires La. Works to work with workforce development boards to create an application for an award.

Proposed law requires La. Works to develop criteria to evaluate applications and proposed training plans and post the criteria on its website. Proposed law further requires the criteria to state that the training plan shall meet, at a minimum, all of the following requirements:

- (1) Be for no longer than six months in duration, unless the department determines an extension is appropriate.
- (2) Conclude within a year after the date the department approves the award.
- (3) Be conducted by a qualified training provider.
- (4) Not be for basic training.
- (5) Result in a credential for a skill that is transferable and recognized by the industry.

Proposed law requires La. Works to coordinate with workforce development boards on the creation of a uniform training agreement to be used by awardees. Proposed law further requires the agreement to include the responsibilities of the awardee and any other requirements the department considers necessary.

Proposed law provides expenses for which program awards shall be used for, including but not limited to any of the following:

- (1) The actual cost of classroom training, including instructor costs and instructional materials.
- (2) The actual cost of on-the-job training, including wage reimbursement, as determined by La. Works.
- (3) Other costs determined by La. Works to be relevant to the training.

Proposed law prohibits an awardee from expending any amount of the program award on any of the following:

- (1) Equipment, including tools and computers.
- (2) Licensing fees.
- (3) Curriculum development.
- (4) Qualified employee travel costs.
- (5) Online training subscriptions.
- (6) Training that begins before the date of the award, unless approved by La. Works.
- (7) Offsetting tuition reimbursement.

Proposed law provides that the amount expended shall not exceed \$2,000 per qualified employee or apprentice.

Proposed law requires annual reporting to the House and Senate committees on labor and industrial relations, the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Senate Committee on Finance. Proposed law further requires what should be included in the annual report.

Proposed law provides for enforcement and rulemaking by La. Works.

Beginning no later than July 1, 2028, La. Works shall develop the criteria for the purposes of evaluating applications and proposed training plans.

The annual reporting required by proposed law shall be March first succeeding July 1, 2028.

(Adds R.S. 23:1861-1866)