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## DIGEST

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HB 549 Reengrossed

2026 Regular Session

Berault

**Abstract:** Creates the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Program ("program").

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

Proposed law establishes the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Fund ("fund") as a special fund within the state treasury and provides for the deposit, use, and administration of monies in the fund. Restricts use of monies in the fund to payment of awards to awardees and for the administration of the program.

Proposed law provides for the purpose of the 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 due the March 1<sup>st</sup> succeeding July 1, 2028.

Effective upon signature of governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

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

#### Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Labor and Industrial Relations to the original bill:

1. Make technical changes.

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Appropriations to the engrossed bill:

1. Revise language establishing the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Fund to include constitutionally required allocation to the Bond Security and Redemption Fund.
2. Make technical changes.