

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia



New Economy Workforce Credential Grant Annual Report 2024

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BACKGROUND

A product of the 2016 Session of the General Assembly, the New Economy Workforce Credential Grant (WCG) Program represents the nation's first pay-for-performance model for funding noncredit workforce training that leads to a credential in a high-demand field. Using a two-pronged approach, the WCG works to increase program completion and credential attainment by incentivizing both the provision of noncredit programs in certain institutions of higher education (IHEs) and enrollment by Virginia residents.

The enabling legislation tasks the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) with administering and monitoring the WCG, as well as reporting on annual progress to the General Assembly and the Virginia Workforce Development Board (VWDB, or the Board). The following report provides a review of enrollments, completions, costs, and outcomes across the Commonwealth over the past fiscal year, from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024.

Summary of Findings for FY 2024

Over the course of the fiscal year (FY 2024), 23 institutions offered WCG training aligned to 12 high-demand occupational fields as identified by the VWDB. Observations from FY 2024 include:

- Collectively, institutions enrolled 15,753 program participants in FY 2024, a 17% increase from FY 2023 and the most since the program's inception.
- Of these participants, 14,864, or 94% completed training. Among program completers, 10,887, or 69% reported earning a credential. Compared with FY2023, rates of both completion and credential attainment dipped slightly, by 0.6% and 1.6% respectively.
- All racial and ethnic groups share high program completion rates, but gaps exist in credential completion: 63% of Hispanic enrollees earned their credential, 6 points below the program average of 69%. Whereas the credentialing rate among all Black or African American students was 10 percentage points below the average at 59%.
- Across programs, students paid an average of \$882 under WCG, with an average price per credential to the state of \$1,968.
- Commercial Driver's License (CDL) programs continued to see the highest number of enrollments, with students representing 19% of all WCG participants for FY 2024. Medical Assistant programs had the second highest enrollment rates, accounting for 5% of all enrollments in FY 2024.
- Since WCG launched in 2017, median annual wages for program participants have by increased \$10,551, or 50%, in the 12 months following program completion.



- Two-thirds of FY 2024 enrollments were by first-time postsecondary students. The median age among participants was 32 years old.

Program Purpose

As outlined by in Chapter 6, Article 4.1 of Title 23.1 in the *Code of Virginia*, the WCG program serves three primary aims:

- (i) creating and sustaining a demand-driven supply of credentialed workers for high-demand occupations in the Commonwealth by addressing and closing the gap between the skills needed by workers in the Commonwealth and the skills of the available workforce in the Commonwealth;
- (ii) expanding the affordability of workforce training and credentialing; and
- (iii) increasing the interest of current and future Virginia workers in technician, technologist, and trade-level positions to fill the available and emerging jobs in the Commonwealth that require less than a bachelor's degree but more than a high school diploma.

The *Code's* description of the program also defines two key elements:

- *High-demand field*: A “discipline or field in which there is a shortage of skilled workers to fill current job vacancies or anticipated additional job openings.”
- *Noncredit workforce credential*: A “competency-based, industry-recognized, portable, and third-party-validated certification or occupational license in a high-demand field.”

The *Code of Virginia* tasks the VWDB with identifying high-demand occupational fields with occupations that require training and/or credentials not associated with a credit-bearing program of study. Participating institutions develop and offer noncredit training programs to prepare students for credential attainment, with approval from their respective governing boards, and submit enrollment and completion data for reimbursement. SCHEV provides overall WCG program administration, including program assessment, data collection from institutions, funding distribution, and managing any disputes between students and institutions.

High-demand Field and Training Alignment Process

Identification of High-Demand Fields

The *Code of Virginia* assigns responsibility for identifying high-demand occupational fields to the VWDB, a body established in 2014 in response to the passage of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Comprised of representatives of state government, postsecondary institutions, and the business and labor communities, the Board oversees the



Virginia Workforce System and publishes biennial updates to the Commonwealth's High-Demand Occupations List, with support from the Virginia Office of Educational Economics (VOEE). While its methodology has evolved over time, the Board issued its most recent list in 2024 based on the following criteria:

- Annual Earnings: Occupations for consideration must pay at least \$29,160 per year, or 200% of the federal poverty level for a single adult.
- The degree to which the occupations required advanced skills, as measured by entry-level education.
- Average Annual Statewide Job Openings: Occupations must have an average of at least 100 openings.
- Projected Five-Year Occupational Growth: Fields must have a minimum projected market growth of 1%.
- Available Apprenticeships: The list also includes formally registered apprenticeable positions through the Department of Workforce Development and Advancement (DWDA), with a demonstrated history of registering apprentices.

The Board also gathered input from stakeholders including representatives in state administration, IHEs, and directors of local Workforce Development Boards. A complete list of training programs offered is provided on the [Virginia Career Works website](#). Based on a review of occupations meeting the criteria above, the VWDB currently identifies high-demand fields, labeled to align with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system with occupations requiring a noncredit workforce credential.

Training Programs Offered by Eligible Institutions

Once the Virginia Board for Workforce Development identifies the relevant high-demand fields, eligible institutions develop new or align existing noncredit training programs to meet credential criteria, with final approval from their boards. The *Code of Virginia* spells out eligible institutions for participation in WCG, including comprehensive community colleges within the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), Richard Bland College, and the state's higher education centers. In FY 2024, 23 eligible institutions provided noncredit training aligned with high-demand fields, the complete list of which is included in Table 8.

The boards of the institutions submit their approved lists to the VWDB. If an institution's board identifies a program that would support a workforce need specific to their local region, they may petition the VWDB for a special exception for that program.



Table 1 provides, by occupational field, a sample list of the types of training and credentials students may attain upon completion.

Table 1: Sample Workforce Training and Certifications Offered by Occupational Field

Occupational Field (Occupation Number)	Sample Workforce Training/Certification Offered
Business & Financial Operations (13)	Lean Practitioner Certification, Six Sigma Certification, Logistics Associate/Technician, SHRM/Senior Professional in Human Resources
Computer and Mathematical (15)	CompTIA A+, Network+ and Server+ Computer Entry Level (CISCO Networking Technician and Associate, CompTIA IT Fundamentals); Information Systems Security Project Management
Architecture & Engineering (17)	Robotics & Mechatronics Systems Certifications
Construction and Extraction (47)	Construction (Project Management, Carpentry, Contractor's License), Highway Construction, Solar Installation
Education, Training and Library (25)	Career Switcher/Teaching License
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical (29)	Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support, Advanced/Emergency Medical Technician, Paramedic, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, Pharmacy Technician, EKG Technician, Mammography Certification, Billing & Coding Specialist
Healthcare Support (31)	Certified Nurse Aide, Medical Assistant, Medication Aide, Phlebotomy Technician, Sterile Processing Technician, Licensed Massage Therapist
Installation, Maintenance and Repair (49)	Electrical and Electrical Systems, Engine Repair, Hydraulics, HVAC, Plumbing, Power Line Worker, Fiberoptic Installation
Office and Administrative Support (43)	Medical Administrative Assistant, Emergency Telecommunicator
Production (51)	Backflow Prevention, Machine Tool Operations, Manufacturing Technician, Manufacturing Entry Level (specialist and production technician), Marine Trade Training, Millwright, Welding (flux, gas and general)
Sales & Related Occupations (41)	Customer Service & Sales Certification, Advanced Customer Service & Sales Certification
Transportation and Material Moving (53)	Commercial Driver's License, Remote Pilot Airman Certification, Heavy Equipment Operations, Tower Crane Operator

Program Requirements and Pay-for-Performance Model

WCG uses a two-pronged a pay-for-performance model that incentivizes both (a) the development and offering of noncredit workforce training programs aligned with high-demand fields, as outlined above, and (b) program enrollment and completion. Under this model, participating eligible institutions offer enrollees a grant for two-thirds of program tuition, contingent on completion of the program. The Commonwealth then reimburses participating institutions for up to two-thirds of the total cost of program tuition (capped at \$4,000), but only after enrolled students meet certain benchmarks. The following table summarizes each payment scenario under WCG.

Table 2: Program Pay-for-Performance Model

Payment Scenario if a student...	Student Pays ...	State Pays Training Institution... *
... Completed training and credential	1/3 program cost	2/3 program cost*
... Completed training but did not earn or report credential to the training institution	1/3 program cost	1/3 program cost*
... Did not complete training and did not earn or report a credential	2/3 program cost	No cost

*Maximum contribution from the state is \$4,000.

WCG’s funding structure does not preclude participating students from using third-party funds, such as noncredit financial aid, training vouchers or employer payment, to cover their share of program costs. No student enrolled in WCG is required to pay the full cost of participation, even if they fail to complete the program.

To receive state reimbursement, each participating institution must provide student-level data indicating program completion and, later, receipt of the corresponding credential.

History of Funding

Annual appropriations for the Workforce Credential Grant have increased six times since its inception, reflecting progressive increases in program participation and demand. Chapter 1 of 2023, Special Session 1 of the General Assembly includes \$18.5 million from the general fund (GF) for WCG for FY 2024, representing the programs largest single-year increase to date.

Table 3: Historical GF Appropriations to WCG

Fiscal Year	Amount
2017	\$5.0 million
2018	\$7.5 million
2019	\$9.5 million
2020	\$13.5 million
2021	\$13.5 million
2022	\$13.5 million
2023	\$13.5 million
2024	\$18.5 million
2025	\$22.5 million*
2026	\$23.8 million*

*Appropriations for FY 2025 and FY 2026 are subject to change, pending enactment of state budget legislation in 2025 and 2026.

The Workforce Credential Grant Fund is non-reverting, i.e., any unexpended funds from one fiscal year may roll into the next fiscal year to cover any expenses above the direct appropriation. Earlier in the program’s history, appropriations exceeded performance

payments, particularly during fiscal years 2020 and 2021. Beginning in FY 2022, annual performance payments began to exceed annual appropriations, necessitating reliance on the accumulated balance leftover from previous years.

In FY 2024, the fund expended \$20.9 million in performance payments. Even with the increased appropriation of \$18.5 million and the carryforward from previous years, performance funding exceeded the available funds by \$587,258. Even with increases factored into current appropriation levels for fiscal years 2025 and 2026, trends in WCG enrollment rates suggest the program will continue to outperform earlier projections.



ENROLLMENT, TRAINING AND CREDENTIAL COMPLETIONS AND COSTS

Statewide, a total of 15,753 individuals enrolled in training programs, of whom 14,864 (94%) completed training. Of students who initially enrolled in WCG programs, 10,887 (69%) went on to earn the corresponding credential. FY 2024 data are based on training courses that ended between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024. Institutions have up to 180 days after the completion of training to obtain verification that a student earned a credential. Training institutions may verify this information through either receiving information from a student or a record match with the entity issuing the credential.

Since its inception, the WCG has recorded 75,152 enrollments, 70,484 completions and 53,854 credentials or licenses. FY 2024 saw a record number of students enrolling; completing the program; and earning their credential or license. The growth of the program is particularly notable given that, in recent years, enrollments in for-credit academic programs offered by many of the same institutions have declined.

Table 4: Workforce Credential Grant Enrollments, Program Completions, and Credentials, History of the Program

Fiscal Year	Enrollments	Completed Training	Earned Credential
2017	5,206	4,958	3,487
2018	4,311	4,000	3,094
2019	6,983	6,570	5,098
2020	7,485	7,032	5,461
2021	9,616	8,705	6,642
2022	12,323	11,496	9,031
2023	13,428	12,749	9,539
2024	15,753	14,864	10,887
Grand Total	75,152	70,484	53,854

Training Offered in High-Demand Occupational Fields

For FY 2024, training programs supporting occupations in transportation, healthcare support, construction, and production saw the highest numbers of enrollments; these fields accounted for three-quarters of program participation. Table 5 summarizes enrollments, completions, reported credentials, average cost to students, total payments by the state and average costs to the state per credential attained, by occupational field.



Table 5: FY 2024 Data on Enrollment, Training Completion and Reported Credentials by Occupational Field

Occupational Field	Enrolled	Completed Training	Reported a Credential Attained	Average Cost to Student	Total State Payments for Training and Credential Completion	Average State Payments per Credential Attained
Production & Manufacturing (51)	1,731	1,662	1,373	\$822	\$2,064,021	\$1,503
Transportation & Material Moving (53)	3,590	3,483	3,060	\$1,566	\$9,349,548	\$3,055
Healthcare Support (31)	2,572	2,278	1,547	\$934	\$3,454,503	\$2,233
Business & Financial Operations (13)	420	411	217	\$663	\$381,170	\$1,757
Computer & Mathematical (15)	1,638	1,529	434	\$696	\$1,299,532	\$2,994
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical (29)	781	666	375	\$939	\$936,839	\$2,498
Office and Administrative Support (43)	125	108	78	\$646	\$115,138	\$1,476
Construction & Extraction (47)	3,032	2,947	2,312	\$244	\$1,232,061	\$533
Architecture & Engineering (17)	24	22	21	\$624	\$26,470	\$1,260
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair (29)	1,760	1,682	1,395	\$790	\$2,403,323	\$1,723
Education, Training, & Library (25)	61	57	57	\$1,330	\$151,620	\$2,660
Sales & Related Occupations (43)	19	19	18	\$276	\$10,200	\$567
All	15,753	14,864	10,887	\$882	\$21,424,425	\$1,968

The Average Cost to Each Student was \$882. The Average Per-Credential Cost to the State was \$1,968.

As shown in Table 5, the average cost of the program to a student (reflecting one-third of the cost) was \$882. SCHEV provided \$20.9 million in reimbursements to institutions for training completions and credentials. This figure is higher than the general fund appropriation for FY 2024 of \$18.5 million. Funds were exhausted because the program doubled its previous year's growth rate and expanded by 17% compared to the previous year's 9% growth.

The pay-for-performance model obligates funds when a student enrolls, but funds are paid when an institution applies for reimbursement upon student completion of training and credential attainment. Notably, some students who completed their program in FY 2023 went on to earn a credential in FY 2024.

Based on the attainment data and the total payments through state general fund, the average state payment per credential attained in FY 2024 was \$1,968. This calculation accounts for performance payments for students who completed the training but not the credential.

Top Training Programs and Alignment to Annual Job Openings

With WCG courses offered across more than 50 program clusters, four program clusters - Commercial Drivers' License, Medical Assistant, Construction Core Skills, and Phlebotomy Technicians – accounting for over half of all enrollments.

This analysis de-duplicates individual records, such that no single student pursuing multiple credentials is counted more than once, as that individual would fill only a single job opening.

In comparing enrollments in these programs to the annual job openings provided by the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), the certifications offered through WCG appear to meet annual need. For example, the VEC currently anticipates roughly 4,886 annual openings for truck drivers. In FY 2024, 2,998 individuals enrolled in credential programs to attain a Commercial Driver's License. Similarly, where the VEC assumes 2,440 annual openings statewide for medical assistants statewide, 812 students enrolled in Medical Assistant programs through WCG in FY2024.

The difference between the annual openings and enrollments does not necessarily indicate a shortage, as training programs offered by private providers are not eligible for WCG and thus are not included in this analysis. It is also important to note that not all employers require attainment of a credential if applicants can otherwise demonstrate having completed training. Likewise, not all students who complete ultimately may not pursue the exact occupation aligned with their program.



Table 6: Top 10 Credentials and Annual Openings by Related Occupational Field, FY 2024

Occupation	Annual Job Openings by Field*	Program	Individuals Enrolled FY 2024**
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	4,866	Commercial Driver's License	2,998
Medical Assistants	2,440	Medical Assistant	812
Carpenters	2,063	Core - Introductory Craft Skills	707
Phlebotomists	471	Phlebotomy Technician	697
Healthcare Support Occupations	26,446	Certified Nurse Aide (CNA)	494
Computer and Information Systems Managers	1,207	CompTIA A+	440
Health Technologists & Technicians, Other	286	Billing & Coding Specialist	329
Highway Maintenance Workers	430	VDOT Asphalt Field	311
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	1,162	Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW)	229
Health Technologists & Technicians	7,065	EKG Technician	172

*Review based on Virginia Office of Education Economics and Virginia Employment Commission short-term 2021-2024 projections. <https://viriniaworks.com/occupational-projections?page80257=1&size80257=12&page79862=1&size79862=12&page81630=1&size81630=12>

**Enrollments figures can include individuals completing multiple credentials. The figures provided for individuals represent unduplicated count of the enrollments.

Differences between openings (demand) and enrollments (supply) may not represent a shortage as other individuals may complete certification through non-WCG programs.

Training Completion Rates Averaged 94%, while Credential Completion Rates Averaged 69%

Completion rates for training vary by field and credential type. Nonetheless, the average completion rate for the last four years remains relatively stable – about 94% of enrolled individuals complete their training. Of those who enrolled, about 69% earn a credential. Some credential rates, such as IT certification, are much lower. Rates may vary because some credentialing and licensing bodies offer testing on-site, while others are located elsewhere. Also, a gap of time may exist between the course end-date and availability of credentialing testing. Further, some students might be able to start employment related to their training without earning a credential.

Table 7: Average Completion Rates, FY 2024

Occupational Field	Training Completion Rate	Credential Completion Rate
Architecture & Engineering (17)	92%	88%
Business & Financial Operations (13)	98%	52%
Computer & Mathematical (15)	93%	26%
Construction & Extraction (47)	97%	76%
Education, Training, & Library (25)	93%	93%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical (29)	85%	48%
Healthcare Support (31)	89%	60%
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair (49)	96%	79%
Office & Administrative Support (43)	86%	62%
Production & Manufacturing (51)	96%	79%
Sales & Related Occupations (41)	100%	95%
Transportation and Material Moving (53)	97%	85%
Average Rate	94%	69%

Participation and Completion Rates by Institution

Half of enrollments in FY 2024 were at institutions in rural areas of the state. The remaining enrollments occurred at urban community colleges: Germanna, Northern Virginia, Tidewater and Brightpoint/Reynolds.¹ Table 8 outlines enrollments and completions by institutions.

¹ Brightpoint and Reynolds Community Colleges share a workforce development division called the Community College Workforce Alliance.

Table 8: FY 2024 Data on Enrollment, Training Completion and Reported Credentials by Eligible Training Institution

Training Institution	Enrolled	Completed Training	Credential Attained
Blue Ridge CC	571	527	416
Brightpoint/Reynolds CC (CCWA)	2,293	2,155	1,495
Central Virginia CC	680	629	507
Danville CC	165	154	49
Eastern Shore CC	254	248	66
Germanna CC	2,981	2,918	2,147
Laurel Ridge CC	1,159	1,073	932
Mountain Empire CC	221	219	208
Mountain Gateway CC	328	307	193
New River CC	200	188	130
Northern Virginia CC	1,178	1,117	620
Patrick & Henry CC	420	376	325
Paul D. Camp CC	505	453	313
Piedmont CC	514	477	358
Rappahannock CC	320	318	202
Southern Virginia Higher Ed Center	85	72	51
Southside Virginia CC	637	606	511
Southwest Virginia CC	431	428	385
Tidewater CC	894	818	478
Virginia Highlands CC	165	148	141
Virginia Peninsula CC	954	874	653
Virginia Western CC	566	531	492
Wytheville CC	232	228	215
Grand Total	15,753	14,864	10,887



STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Enrollment

The Workforce Credential Grant program tends to attract a nontraditional (adult) students; the median age of participation is 32 years. Sixty-six percent of all WCG participants are over the age of 24.

Table 9: Enrollment by Age, FY 2024

Age Group	#	%
Less than 18 years	217	2%
18 to 24 years	4,056	32%
Age 25 to 34 years	3,818	28%
Age 35 to 44 years	2,772	20%
Age 45 to 64 years	2,423	17%
Age 65 years and older	142	1%
Total	15,753	100%

By gender, 62% of enrolled students were male and 32% female; 5% did not indicate their gender in program enrollment paperwork. By race and ethnicity, 44% of WCG enrollment identified as White; 31% identified as Black or African American; and 7% identified as Hispanic/Latino.

Figures 1a, 1b: Student Demographics by Sex and Race/Ethnicity, FY 2024

Figure 1a:

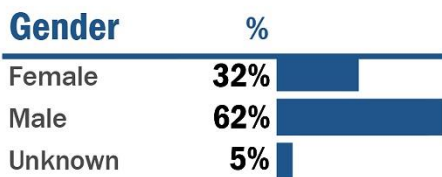
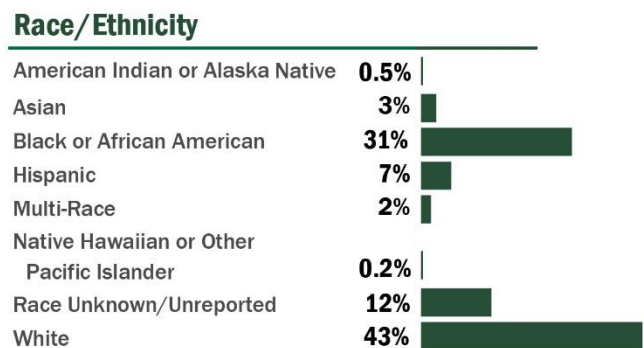


Figure 1b:



WCG also a high percentage of participants who are first-time postsecondary. Two-thirds (10,308) of WCG enrollees in FY 2024 had not previously entered a postsecondary training or credential program.

Success

Credential completion varies by race and ethnicity (training completion rates do not vary significantly for the largest demographic groups.) Asian students earn a credential at a rate five percentage points below the program average, while Black or African American students report a credential attainment rate 10 points below average. However, the accuracy of this data is limited by the prevalence of unreported racial and ethnic information in the enrollment process as well as program choice.

Table 10: Training Completion and Credentials by Race and Ethnicity, FY 2024

Race/Ethnicity	Enrollment	Training Completion	Credential Completion	% Complete Training	% Complete Credential
American Indian or Alaska Native	72	67	52	93%	72%
Asian	510	491	328	96%	64%
Black or African American	4,869	4,460	2,873	92%	59%
Hispanic	1,126	1,060	712	94%	63%
Multi-Race	402	368	253	92%	63%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	34	34	27	100%	79%
Race Unknown/Unreported	1,869	1,769	1,383	95%	74%
White	6,871	6,615	5,259	96%	77%
Total	15,753	14,864	10,887	94%	69%

Male students record a higher overall success rate than female, with a 96% training completion rate and a 75% credential completion rate. As with other completion and attainment rates disaggregated by student demographics, these tabulations could be impacted by various factors.

Table 11: Training Completion and Credentials by Gender, FY 2024

Gender	Enrollment	Training Completion	Credential Completion	% Complete Training	% Complete Credential
Male	9,820	9,463	7,365	96%	75%
Female	5,109	4,614	2,880	90%	56%
Unknown	824	787	642	96%	78%
Total	15,753	14,864	10,887	94%	69%



EARNINGS OUTCOMES

Methodology

Since WCG launched in Fiscal Year 2017, alignment of training to unmet needs for employees in high-demand fields has remained a key priority. The *Code of Virginia* also requires SCHEV to report “information on the wages, including average wage and other relevant information, of students who have completed noncredit workforce training programs by credential name and relevant industry sectors.” To better evaluate the impact of the program on an individual’s job prospects, it is important to compare participants’ wages both before and after program completion.

Through the [Virginia Longitudinal Data System](#), SCHEV staff matched completers’ wages with the wage records of the Virginia Employment Commission. While VEC records are a valuable and unique source of post-program wages, they are imperfect. For example, some people are exempt from reporting, including individuals who are self-employed, work for the federal government and those who meet other exemption qualifications. The VEC collects wage data on a quarterly basis, without any indication of the hours worked, or analysis by full time vs part time employment. The length of time required to collect and match individuals’ VEC and WCG records from also means that wage data is less recent than WCG enrollment data.

To accurately assess programs’ impact on wages, SCHEV staff compared only those students who had at least four quarters of wages before and four quarters of wage records after completing the program. SCHEV staff summed those four quarters to serve as a proxy for annual income, even though those individuals might be earning additional income not counted in that quarterly wage or choosing to work part-time.

Given these limitations, the analysis below accounts for all WCG participants for whom wage records were available at the time of analysis and is not specific to participants from FY 2024. SCHEV have thus analyzed earnings of the remaining 31,882 students with wage records before and after enrolling in the program. Of these participants, 22,557 students earned a credential.

Earnings Analysis

Before enrolling in WCG programs, students earned a median annual wage of \$21,300. Twelve months after leaving the program, students earned a median wage of \$31,851. This \$10,551 change represents a 50% increase compared to the median pre-wage.



Students who went on to earn the credential saw a greater increase to their wages, \$11,669 annually, even though the percentage increase is the same due to these individuals earning a higher wage before entering the program. These wages are not adjusted for inflation.

Table 12: Wages Pre- and Post-Program of WCG Completers, by Credential Status, History of the Program

	# of Students w/ pre- and post- wages successfully matched	Median Pre-wage	Median Post-wage	Median Wage Change
Did Not Earn Credential	9,325	\$14,997	\$22,191	\$7,214
Earned Credential	22,557	\$24,228	\$35,897	\$11,669
Total	31,882	\$21,300	\$31,851	\$10,551

These results are strictly correlational, observing the wages of graduates after experiencing a WCG program, and do not attribute causality. However, a recent [study](#) found that credential earners increased quarterly earnings by approximately \$1,000 and the probability of employment 2.4 percentage points over non-earners.

Median Wages Increased in all Occupational Fields

To measure specific credentials’ impact on wages more effectively, Table 12 examines only the students who earned their credential and for whom their pre- and post-program wages could be matched. In all occupational fields, median wages increased after attaining the credential. Students who earned credentials in Construction and Extraction earned the highest median wage, at \$52,442. However, these students also started with a higher pre-program wage. Students who earned credentials in Education, Training and Library occupations saw the largest median wage increases, over \$24,000. These students represent a relatively narrow slice of the wage analysis, however, with only 194 student records matched.



Table 13: Wages Pre- and Post-Program for Credentialed Students by Industry, History of the Program

	# of Students w/ pre- and post- wages successfully matched	Median Pre-wage	Median Post-wage	Median Wage Change	% Change
Architecture & Engineering	26	\$27,854	\$35,085	\$7,231	26%
Business & Financial Operations	497	\$41,607	\$48,259	\$6,652	17%
Computer & Mathematical	728	\$27,796	\$40,789	\$12,993	47%
Construction & Extraction	6050	\$47,180	\$54,618	\$7,438	16%
Education, Training, & Library	194	\$22,359	\$46,655	\$24,296	109%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	1,026	\$15,935	\$26,487	\$10,552	66%
Healthcare Support	3,196	\$12,399	\$21,067	\$8,668	69%
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	2,527	\$19,404	\$36,351	\$16,947	87%
Office & Administrative Support	202	\$14,372	\$22,610	\$8,238	57%
Production & Manufacturing	2,815	\$17,851	\$32,375	\$14,524	81%
Sales & Related Occupations	109	\$28,312	\$33,295	\$4,983	18%
Transportation & Material Moving	5,173	\$21,143	\$34,147	\$13,004	62%
Grand Total	22,557	\$24,228	\$35,897	\$11,669	48%

Wages by Race and Ethnicity

Regardless of racial or ethnic groups, all credentialed WCG participants saw increases in their median wages. The wage analysis by race and ethnicity is complicated by the high numbers of unknown and unreported race or ethnicity, as well as by variation in population between demographic groups (see the enrollments and success rates by race and ethnicity above).

Table 14: Wages Pre- and Post-Program for Credentialed Students by Race and Ethnicity, History of the Program

	# of Students w/ pre- and post- wages successfully matched	Median Pre-wage	Median Post-wage	Median Wage Change
American Indian or Alaska Native (NH)	100	\$19,479	\$32,472	\$14,993
Asian (NH)	620	\$29,160	\$43,636	\$14,476
Black or African American (NH)	5,397	\$18,257	\$28,204	\$9,947
Hispanic	1,053	\$19,972	\$31,397	\$11,425
Multi-Race (NH)	417	\$14,606	\$27,010	\$12,404
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (NH)	32	\$15,388	\$35,657	\$20,269
Race Unknown/Unreported (NH)	3,026	\$31,378	\$40,970	\$9,592
White (NH)	11,913	\$26,447	\$38,801	\$12,354
Grand Total	22,557	\$24,228	\$35,897	\$11,669

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Program Cap

The 2022-24 biennial budget includes language restricting any single occupational field from receiving more than 25% of WCG funds. However, to support statewide initiatives to increase the supply of truck drivers amid heightened market demand, this restriction did not apply to programs in Transportation and Material Moving for FY 2024. This past Fiscal year, Transportation and Material Moving-related program enrollments accounted for 43% of WCG reimbursements, with most reimbursements tied to Commercial Drivers' Licenses (CDL) training. Enrollment in CDL programs made up less than 25% of total student enrollments for the year; however, these programs have a higher cost per participant due to the cost of equipment required to train students, resulting in their outsized representation in WCG expenses.

As noted above, truck driving positions have 4,866 annual openings, while only 2,998 individuals enrolled in truck driving programs through WCG, suggesting that more demand for this training exists than the current WCG funding structure can supply.

To comply with the 25% cap, VCCS monitored projected encumbrances based on student registrations throughout the fiscal year. In past years, the VCCS periodically has used projected encumbrances to implement a temporary pause on student enrollments in truck-driving programs, thus keeping incurred costs below the reimbursement cap.

Reimbursement Limit Raised to \$4,000 Per Credential

From the beginning of the program through FY2023, the enabling legislation for WCG capped reimbursement for any individual program participant at \$3,000. Recognizing inflationary pressures on salaries and the cost of equipment, Chapter 1 of [the 2023 General Assembly, Special Session I raised the limit](#) on reimbursements to \$4,000, effective July 1, 2023. Two of the 104 credentials offered in FY 24 through the WCG, Power Line Commercial Driver's License and Commercial Driver's License Type A, have both the highest tuition cost and high enrollment - these programs represent 26% of the total credentials earned in FY 2024. Across WCG, 2,989 credentials that triggered reimbursements between \$3,000 and \$4,000 this past fiscal year. Policymakers can expect that a similar portion of training completions and credentials earned in FY 2025 may trigger reimbursements over \$3,000 and up to \$4,000.



Monitoring Legislation in Congress

In 2023, the U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce reported the [*Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act*](#), which would expand Pell Grant eligibility to students enrolled in programs similar to those offered through the Workforce Credential Grant. At \$7,395, the maximum Pell grant would more than cover the maximum total cost of WCG programs (\$6,000).

Some proposed federal eligibility requirements appear to align with WCG requirements, such as alignment between eligible programs and high-demand fields. Other requirements would differ from WCG eligibility - for example, the proposed federal legislation would require students to “receive academic credit” upon program completion. Currently, WCG-participating institutions are only required to “adopt a policy for the award of academic credit to any eligible student who has earned a noncredit workforce credential that is applicable to the student's certificate or degree program requirements.” The Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act also would require graduation rates and job placement rates of at least 70% and require median earnings to exceed those of high school graduates between 25 and 34 years of age. According to U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey’s 2023 one-year estimates, the median earnings of high school graduates in Virginia, regardless of age, is \$41,061. As demonstrated in Table 13, this threshold exceeds many of the median earnings of WCG credential learners.



CONCLUSION

Since the inception of the Workforce Credential Grant in 2016, the program has continued to grow based on both student demand and labor market needs. The largest areas of enrollment occur in occupational fields with annual job openings that exceed training completions. In addition, median earnings continue to grow post-training completion.

