

# State Council of Higher Education for Virginia



## New Economy Workforce Credential Grant Annual Report 2025

March 2026



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## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

During the 2016 session, the General Assembly and Governor established the New Economy Workforce Grant Program (WCG). This grant program, the first of its kind in the nation, provides a pay-for-performance model for funding noncredit workforce training that leads to a credential in a high-demand field. The program also includes requirements for students to complete the program to avoid paying additional costs. A summary of the major components of the program is included below. The establishing statutes appear in Article 4.1 of Title 23.1 of the [Code of Virginia](#).

The purpose of this report is to provide to the General Assembly and the Virginia Board for Workforce Development a review of FY 2025 enrollments, completions, costs and outcomes of the New Economy Workforce Credential Grant program, as outlined in § 23.1-627.7.

## Summary of Findings for FY 2025

In FY 2025, the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center (SVHEC), and New College Institute (NCI) offered training aligned to high-demand occupational fields as identified by the Virginia Board for Workforce Development (VBWD). Observations from FY 2025 include:

- Institutions offered training in 12 high-demand occupational fields.
- Collectively, institutions reported 18,858 enrollments in FY 2025, a 16% increase from FY 2024 and the most since the inception of the program.
- Of the 18,858 enrollments included in this report, 17,751 completed training. Among program completers, 13,165 went on to earn a credential. The completion rate remained relatively stable at 94% and the credential rate improved from 69% in FY 2024 to 70% in FY 2025.
- The average tuition paid by students was \$997. The average state cost per credential attained was \$2,046.
- The program with the highest enrollments was Commercial Driver's License with more than 15.5% of enrollments. Clinical Medical Assistant had the second highest enrollments, accounting for 7.6% of all enrollments in FY 2025.
- For records SCHEV has been able to match with VEC UI wage data, on average participants see a 39% improvement in their wages after graduation.
- 61% of enrollments were individuals entering a postsecondary training program in Virginia for the first time. The median age was 32 years old.



## Program Purpose

As outlined by the Governor and General Assembly in § 23.1-627.2, the WCG program aims to fulfill three primary purposes:

The New Economy Workforce Credential Grant is established for the purpose of

- 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;
- expanding the affordability of workforce training and credentialing; and
- 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 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.”

## History of Funding

Appropriations for the Workforce Credential Grant have increased as student enrollment has increased. The Workforce Credential Grant Fund is non-reverting, i.e., unexpended funds from one fiscal year are rolled into the next fiscal year.

Early 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 2025, the state appropriated \$22.45 million in general funds (GF) to the WCG program. However, as the fund expended \$31.1 million in performance payments, an additional \$15 million was transferred from VCCS account balances to the WCG program to ensure funding was available to meet commitments and enrollment demand. The grant is funded for FY 2026 at \$23.75 million with any remaining carryover from FY 2025 applying to FY 2026.



**Table 1: Historic GF Appropriations to WCG**

Fiscal Year	GF Amount	NGF Amount	Total
2017	\$5.0 million		\$5.0 million
2018	\$7.5 million		\$7.5 million
2019	\$9.5 million		\$9.5 million
2020	\$13.5 million		\$13.5 million
2021	\$13.5 million		\$13.5 million
2022	\$13.5 million		\$13.5 million
2023	\$13.5 million		\$13.5 million
2024	\$18.5 million		\$18.5 million
2025	\$22.45 million	\$15 million	\$37.45 million
2026	\$23.75 million		\$23.75 million

## Program Requirements and Pay-for-Performance Model

The program entails a pay-for-performance model that provides payments for costs to institutions, but only when an individual completes training and when an individual completes a credential.

The requirements include:

- *Eligible institutions and types of training:* Eligible institutions include Virginia community colleges, higher-education centers, the New College Institute, and Richard Bland College. Only noncredit programs (training) are eligible to receive Workforce Credential Grant funding.
- *Alignment to high-demand fields:* Training programs should align with the high-demand fields set by the Virginia Board of Workforce Development. The governing boards of the eligible institutions are required to approve the aligned training programs.
- *Payments and cost of the program:* The student, the institution and the state, as described below, share the program's cost. In addition, the table below illustrates the pay-for-performance model.
  - Student responsibility: A student is required to pay one-third of the total cost of the program upon enrollment (up to \$2,000). Students may use third-party funds, such as non-credit financial aid (e.g. G3 Funding at VCCS), training vouchers or employer payment to cover this cost. If the student does not complete the program, the student is required to pay an additional one-third of the cost of the program.
  - State: If the student completes the training, the state provides one-third of the cost of the program, up to \$2,000, to the institution. If the student earns and reports a credential, the state pays an additional one-third of the cost of the program to the institution, up to another \$2,000.
  - Institution: If a student does not report a credential earned, the institution is responsible for the final one-third of the cost of the program (up to \$2,000).

- *Reporting and payments:* Eligible institutions must provide student-level data to SCHEV to receive reimbursement.
- *Administration:* SCHEV is responsible for administering the program, conducting periodic assessments of the program, collecting student data and publishing an annual report on the program’s performance.

**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.

### High-demand Field and Training Alignment Process

The *Code of Virginia* requires that the Virginia Board of Workforce Development identify high-demand occupational fields. In 2017, the VBWD developed a methodology to identify high-demand programs, using the following criteria:

- The relevance of the occupational group to the state’s economic development strategy, as outlined in then-Governor McAuliffe’s *New Virginia Economy* strategy document.
- Annual statewide job openings, based on Virginia Employment Commission/Bureau of Labor Statistics’ 10-year employment projections. Jobs were considered if they had more than 50 annual openings.
- The degree to which the occupations required advanced skills, as measured by entry-level education.

The board also allows a region to petition to add an occupational field to the list, if that region can demonstrate sufficient demand. A complete list of training programs offered is provided on the [Virginia Career Works](#) website. The High-Demand Occupations List can be found via the Virginia Office of Education Economics Dashboards & Reports page, [here](#).



## Training Programs Offered by Eligible Institutions

Once the Virginia Board for Workforce Development identifies the high-demand fields, the eligible institutions develop new or align existing noncredit training programs to meet the new credential criteria, and their boards approve the new or modified programs. To date, the Virginia Community College System, the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center and the New College Institute (NCI) are the only eligible training institutions offering programs in the high-demand fields.

The boards of the eligible institutions submit their approved lists to the VBWD. A full list of high-demand occupations and aligned training programs offered by eligible training institutions is maintained and updated on the [Virginia Career Works](#) website.

SCHEV staff reviewed the Classification of Instructional Programs code (CIP) to Standard Occupational Classification (SOC, Bureau of Labor Statistics) alignment for each program as determined by the CIP to SOC crosswalk maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics to ensure the programs offered in FY 2025 aligned to the occupations listed on the Virginia High-Demand Occupations List.

**Table 3: Workforce Training & Certifications Offered by Occupational Field**

Occupational Field	Example Workforce Training/Certification Offered
Architecture & Engineering	Robotics & Mechatronics Systems & Automation Certifications
Business & Financial Operations	Lean Practitioner Certification, Six Sigma Certification, Logistics Associate/Technician, SHRM/Senior Professional in Human Resources
Computer & Mathematical	CompTIA Certifications, Certified in Governance, Risk & Compliance, Certified Information Security Manager, AWS Certifications
Construction & Extraction	Construction, Carpentry, Highway Construction, Solar Installation
Education, Training, & Library	Career Switcher Teaching License Prep
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support, Advanced/Emergency Medical Technician, Paramedic, Pharmacy Technician, EKG Technician, Mammography Technician, Billing & Coding Specialist
Healthcare Support	Certified Nurse Aide, Medical Assistant, Medication Aide, Phlebotomy Technician, Sterile Processing Technician, Licensed Massage Therapist
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	Electrical and Electrical Systems, Engine Repair, Hydraulics, HVAC, Plumbing, Power Line Installation & Maintenance, Fiberoptic Installation
Office & Administrative Support	Certified Medical Administrative Assistant, Certified Apartment Leasing Professional
Production & Manufacturing	Machining Tool Operations, Manufacturing Technician, Manufacturing Specialist, Marine Trades Training, Millwright, Welding
Transportation & Material Moving	Commercial Driver's License, Remote Pilot Airman Certification, Heavy Equipment Operations, Tower Crane Operator

## New Programs Offered in FY 2025

Each year, participating institutions adjust their program offerings to align with local and regional workforce needs. In FY 2025, the following programs were made available to students:

Institution	Program	Industry
New College Institute	Introduction to Electrical Training	Installation, Maintenance, & Repair
New College Institute	Fiber Optic Installation – Outside Plant	Installation, Maintenance, & Repair
New College Institute	Fiber Optic Installation – Fiber to the Home	Installation, Maintenance, & Repair
Southern Virginia Higher Education Center	Welding Level 1	Production & Manufacturing
Southern Virginia Higher Education Center	Welding Level 2	Production & Manufacturing
Virginia Community College System	Intermediate Work Zone Traffic Control & Flagger Cert. Renewal	Construction & Extraction
Virginia Community College System	Red Hat Certified System Administrator	Computer & Mathematical
Virginia Community College System	Certified Associate in Project Management	Business & Financial Operations
Virginia Community College System	Certified Apartment Leasing Professional	Office & Administrative Support
Virginia Community College System	Cabinetmaking	Production & Manufacturing
Virginia Community College System	Fiber Optic Installer	Installation, Maintenance, & Repair
Virginia Community College System	Certified Fiber Optic Technician	Installation, Maintenance, & Repair
Virginia Community College System	Certified Information Security Manager	Computer & Mathematical
Virginia Community College System	Scaffolding	Construction & Extraction
Virginia Community College System	Rigger and Signal Person	Construction & Extraction
Virginia Community College System	Collegiate Professional Teacher License	Education, Training, & Library
Virginia Community College System	English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Teacher Endorsement	Education, Training, & Library
Virginia Community College System	Certified Professional Medical Auditor	Healthcare Support
Virginia Community College System	CompTIA Cloud Essentials+	Computer & Mathematical
Virginia Community College System	IEC Electrical Level 2	Installation, Maintenance, & Repair
Virginia Community College System	Certified in Governance, Risk & Compliance	Computer & Mathematical
Virginia Community College System	IT Specialist: Artificial Intelligence	Computer & Mathematical
Virginia Community College System	Applied Fluid Power (Level 2)	Production & Manufacturing
Virginia Community College System	Applied Industry 4.0 (Level 2)	Production & Manufacturing
Virginia Community College System	Applied Industrial Motor Controls	Production & Manufacturing

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Virginia Community College System	Applied Mechanical Systems (Level 2)	Production & Manufacturing
Virginia Community College System	Fundamentals of Sensor Technology	Production & Manufacturing
Virginia Community College System	Masonry - Level 2	Construction & Extraction
Virginia Community College System	Off-Road Diesel Technologies - Maintenance Procedures	Installation, Maintenance, & Repair
Virginia Community College System	OpTIC Path - Optical Telecom Installer	Installation, Maintenance, & Repair
Virginia Community College System	Precision Measurement Instruments	Production & Manufacturing
Virginia Community College System	Central Mix Aggregate Plant Certification Renewal	Construction & Extraction



## ENROLLMENT, TRAINING AND CREDENTIAL COMPLETIONS AND COSTS

In FY 2025, a total of 18,858 individuals were enrolled in training, 17,751 (94%) of whom completed training. Among the training completers, 13,165 (70%) went on to earn the credential. FY 2025 data are based on training courses that ended between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025. Eligible institutions are allowed 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 2016, the program has recorded 97,591 enrollments, 91,581 completions and 69,579 credentials or licenses, although, as noted throughout this report, there are data limitations surrounding completion of certificates or licensure assessments for students in WCG supported programs. FY 2025 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 at Virginia Community Colleges declined during the pandemic years (2020-2023).

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

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Enrollments</b>	<b>Completed Training</b>	<b>Earned Credential</b>
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	15,573	14,864	10,887
2025	18,858	17,751	13,357
<b>Total</b>	<b>97,951</b>	<b>91,581</b>	<b>65,579</b>

## Training Offered in 12 High-Demand Occupational Fields (SOC)

In FY 2025, the highest numbers of enrollments were in Construction & Extraction, Transportation & Material Moving, Healthcare Support, and Installation, Maintenance, & Training; these fields accounted for two-thirds of program enrollments. Table 5 summarizes enrollments, completions, reported credentials, average costs to students, total payments by the state and average costs to the state per credential attained, by occupational field.

**Table 5: FY 2025 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
Architecture & Engineering	19	17	17	\$658	\$22,192	\$1,305
Business & Financial Operations	445	441	235	\$693	\$437,914	\$1,863
Computer & Mathematical	1,814	1,690	525	\$908	\$2,012,042	\$3,832
Construction & Extraction	3,637	3,514	2,737	\$298	\$1,892,112	\$691
Education, Training, & Library	211	208	172	\$1,330	\$244,970	\$1,424
Healthcare Practitioners & Technicians	1,034	906	496	\$921	\$1,272,168	\$2,565
Healthcare Support	3,247	2,932	2,068	\$1,021	\$5,110,658	\$2,471
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	2,686	2,510	2,214	\$939	\$4,640,820	\$2,096
Office & Administrative Support	211	191	133	\$659	\$208,012	\$1,564
Production & Marketing	2,165	2,077	1,625	\$1,068	\$3,877,412	\$2,386
Sales & Related Occupations	11	9	5	\$207	\$2,880	\$576
Transportation & Material Moving	3,378	3,256	2,891	\$1,857	\$11,450,919	\$3,961
	<b>18,874</b>	<b>17,751</b>	<b>13,165</b>	<b>\$997</b>	<b>\$31,158,099</b>	<b>\$2,046</b>

## Program Costs

As shown in Table 5, the average cost to program completers (reflecting one-third of the cost) was \$997. SCHEV provided reimbursements to institutions through state general funds in the amount of \$31.1 million for training completions and credentials. This figure is higher than the general fund appropriation for FY 2025 of \$22.45 million. A one-time transfer of \$15 million from the non-General Fund tied to the G3 program covered the overage for FY 2025 and the remainder of that balance will be applied to FY 2026.

In FY 2025, SCHEV directed the Virginia Community College System and other participating institutions to develop funding management plans based on the program's past performance on their campus. The goal was to avoid creating obligations to the program that exceeded appropriations for the fiscal year (plus remainder of \$15M transfer). Thus far in FY 2026, institutions have adhered to their plans.

The pay-for-performance model obligates funds when a student registers, but funds are paid when an institution submits reimbursement upon completion of training and earning of a credential. And as seen in Table 4, enrollments, completions and credentials have grown each year since the inception of the program. Readers of this report should keep in mind that because of the unique pay-for-performance model (and rolling program start dates), encumbered funds can be reimbursed across fiscal years.

Based on the attainment data and the total payments through state general fund, the average state payment per credential attained in FY 2025 was \$2,046 (total payments/credentials attained). This figure includes performance payments for students who completed the training but not the credential.

Total program cost to the student is capped at \$4,000, institution reimbursement is capped at \$4,000 per student and total program cost overall is capped at \$6,000 per student.

### **Top Training Programs and Alignment to Annual Job Openings**

While hundreds of certifications were offered in FY2025, nearly three-quarters of students enrolled within 10 broad program clusters. Of the more than 50 certification programs offered, four certifications accounted for over half of enrollments: Commercial Drivers' License, Clinical Medical Assistant, Construction Core Skills, Phlebotomy Technician, Certified Nurse Aide, and Shielded Metal Arc Welding.

In comparing enrollments in these programs to the annual job openings provided by the Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE), the certifications appear to address an annual need. For example, VOEE projects annual openings for heavy truck drivers to be about 6,552. In FY 2025, 2,923 individuals enrolled in the credential program to attain a Commercial Driver's License. Similarly, VOEE projects annual openings for medical assistants to be 2,804 while 1,439 students enrolled in Clinical Medical Assistant programs.

The difference between the annual openings and enrollments does not necessarily indicate a shortage, as training programs offered by private providers are not included in this analysis. On the other hand, not all students go on to earn their credential, and those who do complete may not pursue the exact occupation aligned with their program.



**Table 6: Top 10 Credentials & Annual Openings by Occupational Field, FY 2025**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Projected Openings*</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>
Heavy, Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	6,552	Commercial Driver's License	2,923
Medical Assistants	2,804	Clinical Medical Assistant	1,439
Carpenters	2,316	Core - Introductory Craft Skills	1,215
Phlebotomists	512	Phlebotomy Technician	1,056
Nurse Assistants	6,514	Certified Nurse Aide (CNA)	573
Welders, Solderers, and Brazers	1,207	Shielded Metal Arc Welding	545
Electricians	2,812	Electrical - Level 1	465
HVAC Mechanics	1,375	HVAC - Level 1	378
Computer Systems Analysts	1,737	CompTIA A+	369
Medical Records Specialists	401	Certified Billing & Coding Specialist	328

\*Based on Virginia Office of Education Economics 2024 projections: [Virginia 2024 High Demand Occupations Dashboard - The Virginia Office of Education Economics](#)

## **Training Completion Rates Averaged 94%, Credential Completion Rates Averaged 70%**

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 complete training, 70% earn a credential – an improvement of 1% from FY 2024.

Rates may vary since some credentialing and licensing bodies offer testing on-site, while others are located elsewhere. Institutions rely on students to self-report and show proof of credential attainment in many programs. Additionally, a time-lapse may exist between the course end-date and availability of credentialing testing. Finally, some students may be offered employment related to their training prior to or without earning the credential.



**Table 7: Average Completion Rates, FY 2025**

<b>Occupational Field</b>	<b>Training Completion Rate</b>	<b>Credential Completion Rate</b>
Architecture & Engineering	89%	89%
Business & Financial Operations	99%	53%
Computer & Mathematical	93%	29%
Construction & Extraction	97%	75%
Education, Training, & Library	99%	82%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	88%	48%
Healthcare Support	90%	64%
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	93%	82%
Office & Administrative Support	91%	63%
Production & Manufacturing	96%	75%
Sales & Related Occupations	82%	45%
Transportation and Material Moving	96%	86%
<b>Average</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>70%</b>

**Participation and Completion Rates by Institution**

The number of students enrolling across training institutions varies. Table 8 provides enrollments, program completions, and validated credentials by institution. Half of enrollments in FY 2025 were at institutions in rural areas of the state. The highest program enrollments occurred at urban community colleges: Germanna, Laurel Ridge, Northern Virginia, and Brightpoint/Reynolds.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Brightpoint and Reynolds community colleges share a workforce development division called the Community College Workforce Alliance.

**Table 8: FY 2025 Data on Enrollment, Completion and Credentials by Institution**

<b>Training Institution</b>	<b>Enrolled</b>	<b>Completed Training</b>	<b>Credential Reported</b>
Blue Ridge CC	617	580	461
Brightpoint/Reynolds (CCWA)	2,458	2,351	1,584
Central Virginia CC	997	869	772
Danville CC	272	232	41
Eastern Shore CC	470	465	121
Germanna CC	3,320	3,223	2,423
Laurel Ridge CC	1,573	1,474	1,304
Mountain Empire CC	277	275	247
Mountain Gateway CC	404	356	176
New College Institute	26	26	25
New River CC	252	233	178
Northern Virginia CC	1,307	1,244	773
Patrick & Henry CC	607	531	472
Paul D. Camp CC	553	501	358
Piedmont CC	514	477	358
Rappahannock CC	429	424	270
Southern Virginia Higher Ed Center	54	47	35
Southside Virginia CC	670	651	575
Southwest Virginia CC	501	500	458
Tidewater CC	1,177	1,062	688
Virginia Highlands CC	193	185	145
Virginia Peninsula CC	1,237	1,121	876
Virginia Western CC	558	528	468
Wytheville CC	385	381	355
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,858</b>	<b>17,751</b>	<b>13,165</b>

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

### Enrollment Demography

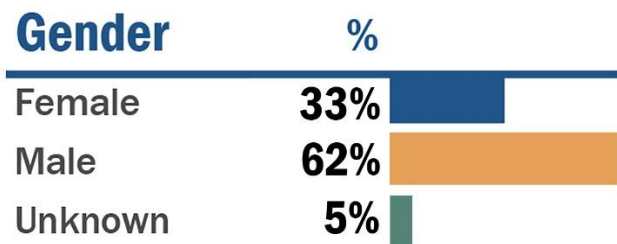
The Workforce Credential Grant program tends to serve non-traditional students; indicated by the median age of students: 32 years. However, the 18-24 years age group grew by 3% in FY 2025 while most other groups decreased slightly. This could signify a growing interest in workforce credentials among typical college-age students.

**Table 9: Enrollment by Age, FY 2025**

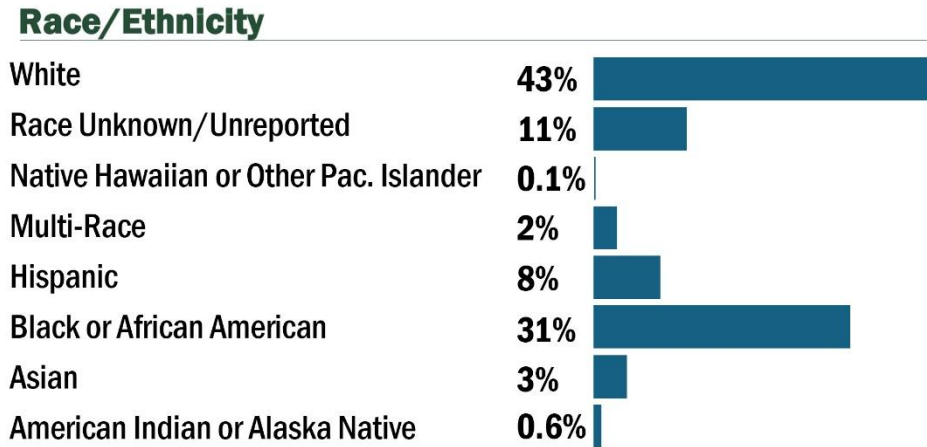
Age Group	#	%
Less than 18 years	477	3%
18 to 24 years	6,570	35%
Age 25 to 34 years	5,183	27%
Age 35 to 44 years	3,490	18%
Age 45 to 64 years	2,954	16%
Age 65 years and older	188	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,858</b>	<b>100%</b>

By gender, 62% of enrolled students were male; 33% female; and 5% unknown. By race and ethnicity, 43% of enrollment were white; 31% were Black or African American; and 8% were Hispanic.

**Figure 1a: Student Demographics by Gender, FY 2025**



**Figure 1b: Student Demographics by Race/Ethnicity, FY 2025**



**Prior Postsecondary Enrollment**

The WCG program serves students from a range of post-secondary experiences – from students who have never enrolled in a program after high school, to those who enrolled but did not complete their program, to several individuals who hold doctorate degrees and are returning for additional skills or training. We can identify these populations because every student submitted in postsecondary data collections to SCHEV is assigned a unique identification number. Table 10 below illustrates the number of enrollees who were matched with prior enrollments in a Virginia postsecondary program as well as those identified that earned postsecondary awards prior to WCG enrollment.

**Table 10: Prior Enrollment**

Total WCG Enrollment 2017-2025	97,590	% Total
Prior Enrollment Matches	29,946	31%
Prior Enrollments - Earned Award	11,635	12%

The following figure shows the range of awards held by students prior to enrollment in a WCG program.



**Table 11: Prior Awards Held by WCG Program Enrollees**

<b>Award Type</b>	<b>Count</b>
Award of less than 1 Academic Year	1,862
Award of at least 1 but less than 2 Academic Years	688
Associate Degree (Bachelor’s Credit)	2,085
Associate Degree (Occ/Tech Credit)	1,843
Award of at least 2 but less than 4 Academic Years	2
Four-Year Bachelor’s Degree	4,204
Five-Year Bachelor’s Degree	3
Post-Baccalaureate/Post-Professional/Graduate Certificate	34
First Professional Degree	42
Master's Degree	837
Post-Master's Certificate	9
Doctorate Degree	46

**Change Over Time**

In FY 2025, 60% (11,484) of WCG enrollees had not previously entered a postsecondary training or credential program in Virginia. It may be significant to note that this proportion decreased by 6% from FY 2024’s rate – indicating that more individuals who previously enrolled in or completed postsecondary education in Virginia, chose to return for additional skills and certification.

Based on the data shown in Table 12 below, we see growth in the number of students who previously enrolled in a postsecondary program in Virginia returning to postsecondary education via a Workforce Credential Grant supported program. These individuals may be upskilling or reskilling as part of their career development; they could also be students who enrolled in Dual Enrollment courses in high school, or returning WCG students.

**Table 12: Prior Enrollment, Change Over Time FY 2017 – FY 2025**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Enrolled</b>	<b>No Prior Virginia PS Enrollment</b>	<b>% Enrolled</b>	<b>Prior Virginia PS Enrollment</b>	<b>% Enrolled</b>
FY 2017	5,205	4,373	84%	832	16%
FY 2018	4,307	3,538	82%	769	18%
FY 2019	6,980	5,124	73%	1,856	27%
FY 2020	7,489	5,058	68%	2,431	32%
FY 2021	9,618	6,914	72%	2,704	28%
FY 2022	12,367	8,391	68%	3,976	32%
FY 2023	13,453	9,221	69%	4,232	31%
FY 2024	15,961	10,381	65%	5,580	35%
FY 2025	18,858	11,484	61%	7,374	39%

## EARNINGS OUTCOMES

When the legislature established the program in 2016, alignment of training to high-demand fields where unmet needs for workers existed was 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 also important to measure wages – both prior to enrollment in the program as well as post-completion.

### Limitations

While SCHEV can match participant data with the records held by the Virginia Longitudinal Data System, there are several limitations posed by the Virginia Employment Commission’s Unemployment Insurance wage (UI wage) dataset.

- 1) The wages of self-employed/independent contract (1099) workers are not included in the UI wage data; this effectively excludes any tradespeople or individuals working as independent contractors in their field after completing their training program.
- 2) Individuals who are employed in another dataset: military, federal, or another state are not included in the UI wage data. Given our large population of workers who fall into those categories in Virginia, this shortfall also significantly impacts our ability to match records.

As a result of these limitations, SCHEV is only able to match about 28% of all program participants in the UI wage data. As a result, any analysis of wage outcomes for students completing WCG supported programs should acknowledge that it is not a complete, representative sample of student outcomes. There are real limitations on what conclusions can be drawn since researchers have no insight into the outcomes for 72% of the program participants.

### Methodology

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:



- 1) some workers are exempt from reporting, such as individuals who are self-employed, work for the federal government or those who meet other exemption qualifications (see above),
- 2) wages are collected on a quarterly basis, without any indication of the hours worked, rendering it impossible to know whether an individual's quarterly wage was based on full-time or part-time work,
- 3) additionally, there is no indicator in the UI wage data as to which industry the individual was working in – negating the ability to draw conclusions regarding the validity of a wage in a given field,
- 4) finally, the matching of individuals' records from their training to their incomes also takes time, resulting in wage outcomes that are not as up to date as information about the program itself.

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 their 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 that they could be choosing to work part-time.

Given the need to restrict analysis to students with wages before and after completing the program, the analysis below includes students throughout the history of the program and not for FY 2025 alone. SCHEV staff then analyzed earnings of the remaining 27,263 students with wage records before and after enrolling in the program. Of these, 21,040 students earned a credential.

## **Earnings Analysis**

Before enrolling in WCG programs, students earned a median annual wage of \$25,246. Twelve months after leaving the program, students earned a median annual wage of \$35,272. This \$10,025 change represents a 39% increase compared to the median pre-wage.

Students who went on to earn the credential saw a greater increase in their wages, \$11,619 annually, reflecting a wage increase of 49%. These wages are not adjusted for inflation.



**Table 13: Wages Pre- and Post-Program of WCG Completers, by Credential Status, History of the Program**

	Students with pre- and post-program wages	Median pre- program wage	Median post- program wage	Median Wage Change
Did Not Earn Credential	6,223	\$22,281	\$30,396	\$8,115
Earned Credential	21,040	\$28,212	\$40,148	\$11,936
Average		\$25,246	\$35,272	\$10,025

These results illustrate the outcomes for a representative sample: participants who find positions that are covered by unemployment insurance (W-2 wage) after completing their WCG supported program (27,263 out of 97,590 total records). These results cannot be viewed as representative of individuals who find employment outside the typical W-2 wage positions as we do not insight into the wage outcomes for those individuals.

### Median Wages Increased in all Occupational Fields

To measure specific credentials' impact on wages more effectively, Table 13 examines only the students who earned their credential and successfully had their pre- and post-program wages matched.

Considering almost 70,000 students have earned a credential over the life of the WCG program, **only being able to match 21,040 students** in the wage data indicates that this analysis needs to be viewed as a very limited sample and not a true representation of impact on participants' wage outcomes.

In all occupational fields, median wages increased after earning the credential. Students who earned credentials in Construction and Extraction earned the highest median wages, at \$58,633. However, these students also started with a higher pre-wage.

Students who earned credentials in the Education, Training and Library and Production & Manufacturing fields saw the largest median wage increases.



**Table 13: Wages Pre- and Post-Program for Credentialed Students by Industry, 2016-2025**

	# of Students Matched	Median Pre-Program wage	Median Post-Program wage	Median Wage Change	% Increase
Architecture & Engineering	26	\$27,853	\$37,989	\$10,136	36%
Business & Financial Operations	482	\$43,340	\$50,703	\$7,363	17%
Computer & Mathematical	687	\$33,641	\$45,166	\$11,525	34%
Construction & Extraction	6,147	\$51,129	\$58,633	\$7,504	15%
Education, Training, & Library	192	\$22,635	\$46,756	\$24,121	107%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	926	\$18,283	\$29,062	\$10,779	59%
Healthcare Support	2,854	\$14,750	\$23,574	\$8,824	60%
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	2,360	\$23,007	\$39,844	\$16,837	73%
Office & Administrative Support	181	\$15,477	\$25,255	\$9,778	63%
Production & Manufacturing	2,518	\$21,836	\$36,205	\$14,369	65%
Sales & Related Occupations	107	\$28,433	\$33,748	\$5,315	19%
Transportation & Material Moving	4,560	\$25,746	\$38,629	\$12,883	50%
<b>Average</b>		<b>\$27,178</b>	<b>\$38,797</b>	<b>\$11,619</b>	<b>49%</b>



## **ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

### **Program Cap**

The 2022-24 biennial budget included language restricting any single occupational field from receiving more than 25% of WCG funds. 'Occupational field' according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics is a cluster of occupations and thus includes multiple programs per CIP-SOC alignment.

In FY 2025, 37% of GF reimbursements went to programs in the Transportation & Material Moving field. Most of these programs were Commercial Drivers' Licenses (CDLs). CDLs made up less than 25% of individual student enrollments, but contributed to Transportation & Material Moving occupational field exceeding the 25% program cap.

As noted above, truck driving positions have 6,552 annual openings, while only 2,923 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, the VCCS monitors 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, to stay below the reimbursement cap. Programs were not paused in FY 2025 due to the heightened demand for truck drivers and statewide initiatives to increase the supply of commercial driver's license holders.

### **Reimbursement Limit Remains the Same at \$4,000 Per Credential**

From FY 2017 to FY 2023, a reimbursement limit of \$3,000 per individual credential completion was required. Recognizing inflationary pressures on salaries and equipment, [the 2023 General Assembly raised the limit](#) on reimbursements to \$4,000, effective July 1, 2023.

Of the 13,165 credentials earned in FY 2025, 2,398 required reimbursements to the \$4,000 cap; 3,258 credentials required reimbursements between \$3,000 and \$4,000.

As inflation continues to drive program material and operation costs up, there may be a need to revisit the program reimbursement cap in future.



## **Workforce Pell Expansion**

In July 2025, Congress passed legislation that expanded federal Pell funding to include [Workforce Pell](#).

Workforce Pell grants will apply to nondegree (and potentially some noncredit) programs at Title IV institutions that are aligned to workforce development needs in the state where offered. Students will have to submit a FAFSA application in order to qualify for Workforce Pell funding and Workforce Pell funding will count towards a students' lifetime Pell eligibility/allowance.

As a result of the parameters set forth in the legislation, Workforce Pell grant funding will not apply to Workforce Credential Grant programs – primarily due to the program length and wage outcome requirements.

This means that the Workforce Pell funding could instead be utilized as a bridge from noncredit programs supported by the Workforce Credential Grant to for-credit degrees eligible for traditional Pell funding. We anticipate that institutions will develop education pathways for students that span the noncredit to credit spectrum, allowing students to move in and out of postsecondary education as needed throughout their career.

The Workforce Credential Grant will continue to serve Virginia students interested in short-term workforce training programs aligned with their career goals.

## **Future Research Questions**

In the future, we hope to be able to better understand participation in programs by economic region given that institutions have campuses in multiple locations and currently, data is not reported by campus. Having campus location information would allow SCHEV staff to better understand where programs are supporting regional and hyperlocal workforce needs.

Additionally, we hope that future UI wage records will include information on the locality or economic region in which workers are employed – allowing researchers to investigate whether program completers are finding employment in the local area to which the program was targeted to support.



## CONCLUSION

Since 2016, enrollments have grown consistently each year – student demand for programs continues to expand and evolve along with the needs of Virginia’s employers.

Entering the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Workforce Credential Grant, we recognize the opportunity to look back at the program’s performance and make recommendations to institutions and the legislature for future fund management.

Credential rates continue to be a challenge in performance evaluations and SCHEV staff plans to discuss strategies to improve those rates with participating institutions.

Although existing UI wage data restricts our current evaluation, we hope that improvements provided through access to enhanced UI wage data will allow us to be able to provide a more detailed analysis of outcomes at the regional and hyperlocal levels in the future.

As solutions are developed for the data shortfalls, SCHEV’s ability to measure the impact individually and collectively will improve.

Despite the above limitations in program evaluation, the WCG remains an unqualified success and represents a solid return on investment for the Commonwealth in terms of state investment resulting in rapid improved economic mobility and employability for individuals completing the programs.

