

Skilled Worker Grant Program



2021 annual report pursuant to RCW 43.329.050

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT &
COMPETITIVENESS

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Report to the Legislature

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Introduction

Authorizing legislation

In 2017, the Washington State Legislature passed Senate Bill 5713, now codified in Chapter [43.329 RCW](#). This legislation created the Skilled Worker Outreach, Recruitment and Career Awareness Training Program (Skilled Worker Awareness, or SWA). The program's intent is to educate and train individuals to perform skills needed in the workforce and award industry or state-recognized certificates, credentials, associate degrees, professional licenses or similar evidence of achievement.

[RCW 43.329.050](#) directs the Department of Commerce to establish a grant review committee to review grant applications and make recommendations on who should receive a matching grant and the amount. Pursuant to [RCW 43.329.070\(2\)](#), the grant review committee is required to submit an annual report as follows:

- (2) By December 1, 2019, and by each December 1st thereafter, the grant review committee shall submit an annual report to the governor and appropriate committees of the legislature in accordance with the reporting requirements in RCW 43.01.036. The report must include:
 - (a) The number of matching grants awarded in the prior year, including the amount, recipient, and duration of each matching grant;
 - (b) The number of individuals who enrolled in and completed training programs promoted by each grant recipient;
 - (c) The number of individuals who obtained employment in a position that uses the skills for which they were trained through a training program promoted by a grant recipient; and
 - (d) Other information obtained from grant recipients' reports under subsection (1) of this section.

Background

As businesses, industries and workplaces become increasingly complex, employers need workers with skills and educations that allow them to adapt and excel in evolving environments.¹

In the 2017-19 biennium, Commerce received a \$300,000 appropriation to administer the program and oversee a grant process to meet program objectives. Eligible applicants include any government or non-government entity, association or organization that is not a private vocational school. By statute, grant recipients must provide a 2:1 cash match (no in-kind contributions allowed). The Grant Review Committee has awarded grants in three rounds:

2018 grantees

- Global Business Resources
- Washington Hospitality Association
- Whatcom Community College

2019 grantees

- Whatcom Community College

¹ Washington Student Achievement Council, A Skilled and Educated Workforce 2017 Update

- Washington Hospitality Association
- Association of General Contractors

2020-21 grantees

- Inland Northwest Associated General Contractors
- Whatcom Community College

The annual reports for past years are listed below:

- [2019 report](#)
- [2020 report](#)

As of this report, the \$300,000 legislative appropriation has been fully expended. Per RCW 43.329.900, this program expires July 1, 2022. This is the final report for this program.

2020-21 grant outcomes

The 2020-21 grantees report the following outcomes:

Outcomes	Whatcom Community College	Inland NW Association of General Contractors
Grant amount	\$30,000	\$20,000
Duration	May 5, 2020-June 30, 2021	May 5, 2020-December 31, 2021
Enrollment	33	40
Program completion	31	39
Employment (in field of study)	9	26
Other information	<p>The majority of students face socio-economic barriers, resulting in needing financial aid and campus supports such as I-Catch, Opportunity Grant, and Basic Food, Employment & Training.</p> <p>These financial supports help students with tuition, books, supplies and crisis support.</p>	<p>Many of students in the six-week classes this year experienced barriers (lack of driver's license, no resume, lack of skills, transportation issues and lack of work clothes).</p> <p>Twenty-six students gained employment in an industry in which they received trained. Employers include the City of Spokane, Association of General Contractors apprenticeships and local businesses.</p>

Grant administration

Overview

Commerce convened an 11-member grant review committee consisting of representatives from the following organizations:

- Department of Labor and Industries
- Employment Security Department
- Department of Enterprise Services
- Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
- State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
- Two representatives from business
- Two representatives from labor
- Two representatives from the Washington Apprenticeship and Training Council

The grant review committee established criteria for ranking eligible applicants for matching grants, including:

- Potential to reach a broad audience, including populations with barriers to employment as identified by the state's Strategic Workforce Plan
- Demonstrated collaboration with and use of Centers of Excellence
- Ability to increase enrollment and completion in skilled worker training programs
- Potential to fill existing needs
- Demonstrated ability to provide monetary contributions and secure an industry partner

The application process opened Jan. 1 and awards were announced by April 1. In the 2020-2021 cycle, the committee awarded two grants totaling \$50,000.

Program expiration

The program expires on July 1, 2022. This is the program's final report. [Career Connect Washington](#), codified under chapter 28C.30 RCW, began in 2019 and now serves as the state's primary work-based learning initiative.