



Frequently Asked Questions

Workforce Credentials and Virginia's new workforce training grants program

In every corner of the Commonwealth, people are eager to find meaningful jobs, and employers are looking to hire workers with the right skills.

Recognizing the importance of promoting a capable workforce to meet the needs of employers and build Virginia's economy, state lawmakers created a new grant program in 2016 to make specific workforce training programs much more affordable for students.

Statewide, Virginia's Community Colleges are excited to participate in the New Economy Workforce Industry Credential Grants program. We know that affordability is key for students seeking training for a new career.

Through the new grant program, we also are expanding our training capacity by developing new programs, and adding additional classes and class locations to make workforce training more accessible. As we celebrate the progress and promise of the first 50 years of Virginia's Community Colleges, we are poised to connect more people with high-demand jobs for the future.

You can learn more at the workforce development office at your local Community College. In the meantime, we hope the information below will answer your questions about workforce credentials and the new targeted grants program.

Q. First things first: how can I find the Virginia Community College closest to me?

A. If you are in Virginia, you are within 30 miles of a community college. To find your nearest local campus, visit the home page of our website, and look for the College Locator feature in the upper left corner of the screen. To get to our home page, click [here](#).

Q. What is a workforce or industry credential?

- A. “Workforce Credential” and “Industry Credential” are terms used to describe an array of qualifications that you can earn to prepare yourself for a wide variety of careers.

These credentials include **licenses, certifications or registrations** that are sometimes required or recommended for people applying for certain jobs. Having the right credential gives you a big advantage during the hiring process.

Depending on the career pathway involved, the organization granting the credential might be a state agency, an industry or trade group, or other entity.

Q. What kinds of careers are we talking about here?

- A. Workforce Credentials could help you secure a wide variety of jobs, such as certified welder, electrician, medical records tech, computer network specialist, pharmacy tech, digital security specialist, emergency medical tech, industrial machinery mechanic, dental assistant and commercial truck driver, to name just a few.

These are jobs that require specific skills, but not necessarily a traditional college degree.

Virginia’s Community Colleges offer a wide variety of training programs to prepare students to earn Workforce and Industry Credentials. The programs vary at campuses across the state to meet the needs of the local economy.

Q. Which Workforce Credential training programs are included in the new state grants program?

- A. The Virginia General Assembly approved a new grant program in 2016 to reduce the student cost of specific Workforce Credential training programs by two-thirds so that more people can access this type of training and the jobs that stem from it.

The initial 124 courses were chosen to be part of the new state grant program because Virginia businesses are eager to hire workers with those specific skills. We expect the grant-eligible list to change and grow over time to meet the evolving needs of Virginia's employers and economy.

To see the list of Workforce Credential training programs included in the grant program and learn how to enroll, click [here](#).

Q. How were the particular programs chosen to be eligible for the New Economy Workforce Industry Credential Grants?

- A.** Virginia's Community Colleges and the Virginia Board of Workforce Development consulted with Virginia businesses to develop the list. Businesses are eager to hire people with certain skills and certain industry-recognized credentials.

The first grant-eligible list was approved July 1, 2016, and included 124 in-demand Workforce Credential training programs. We expect the grant-eligible list to change and grow over time to meet the evolving needs of Virginia's employers and economy.

You can check with the workforce development office at your local Community College to see the courses that are offered in your area and learn how to enroll. You can also scroll through the list [here](#).

Q. How would the grants affect my cost to enroll in one of the specific Workforce Credential training programs?

- A.** If you enroll in one of the Workforce Credential training programs covered by the new grants, ***you would pay only one-third of the full cost.***

It's important to remember that program costs vary widely, depending on the length and complexity of the training.

That said, MOST of the grant-eligible programs on the list are now available to students for \$100 to \$1,500 compared to three times that amount in the past.

Note: the maximum value of each grant is \$3,000. So, for example, if you enroll

in and successfully complete a grant-eligible program that normally costs \$4,500, you now pay \$1,500, and the grant covers \$3,000 of the cost.

In addition, new financial aid is now available that could **further** reduce student costs for certain in-demand Workforce Credential training programs. For details, check with the workforce development office at your local Community College.

Q. How many students will be able to sign up for the new grants program?

A. The General Assembly budgeted enough money to allow approximately 10,000 eligible students to receive Workforce Credentials Grants for training costs during the two-year period beginning July 2016.

Q. How long does it take to complete Workforce Credential training programs?

A. The length of each training program varies, according to the needs of the industry. But, in general, these are short-term training programs that can be completed in weeks or months, compared to semesters or years to obtain a traditional degree.

Q. I work for a living. Are Workforce Credentials training programs available at times when I can take classes?

A. Virginia's Community Colleges offer training programs designed to meet the needs of working people. Many classes are available at nights and on weekends.

Through the new grant program, we also are expanding our training capacity by developing new programs, and adding additional classes and class locations to make workforce training more accessible.

Check with the workforce development office at your local Community College for details about training programs and schedules.

Q. Is Workforce Credential training the same thing as seeking an associate's degree?

A. No. Workforce Credential training is a short-term, non-degree program. But plenty of people who have earned Workforce Credentials have gone on to earn associates degrees. Also, industry certifications often can be combined or “stacked” with other certifications to open up additional career opportunities.

Q. Will my local community college help me with the industry certification process?

A. Yes. As students successfully complete Workforce Credential training, community colleges will help them reach out to the industry and trade organizations that award relevant industry certifications. Students may be responsible for fees related to industry exams, registration and licensing.

Q. Are there other Workforce Credential training programs that are NOT covered by Virginia’s new grant program?

A. Yes. The grant program focuses on the certification training programs that are most in demand by Virginia businesses. The initial list, approved July 1, 2016, included 124 specific training programs. We expect the grant-eligible list to change and grow over time to meet the evolving needs of Virginia’s employers and economy. To find out more, please contact the workforce development office at your local Community College.

To see the list of Workforce Credential training programs included in the grant program and learn how to enroll, click [here](#).