

Skilled Worker Outreach, Recruitment and Career Awareness Grant Program



Chapter 43.329 RCW

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REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Washington, like other states, is experiencing a significant shortage of skilled workers. Nearly 70 percent of all projected job openings will require at least some education beyond high school, with two-third requiring mid-level education or higher. As businesses, industries, and workplaces become increasingly complex, employers need workers with skills and education that allow them to adapt and excel in evolving environments.¹

In 2017, the Washington State Legislature passed [Substitute Senate Bill 5713, later codified in Chapter 43.329 RCW](#). This legislation created the Skilled Worker Outreach, Recruitment and Career Awareness Training Program (Skilled Worker Awareness or SWA). Its goal 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.

In the 2017-19 biennium, Commerce received an appropriation of \$300,000 to administer the program and oversee a grant process to meet program objectives. There was no appropriation for the 2019-21 biennium. Eligible applicants include any government or non-government entity, association or organization that is not a private vocational school.

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 electronically to the governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature beginning Dec. 1, 2019, and by each Dec. 1 thereafter on these outcomes:

- (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
- (d) Other information obtained from grant recipients' reports under subsection (1) of this section

The Grant Outcomes section below responds to this requirement.

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

Grant Outcomes

Matching Grants Awarded in 2018

Grants Awarded-- 43.329.070(2)(a)	Global Business Resources	Washington Hospitality Association Education Foundation	Whatcom Community College
2018 Grants awarded	X	X	X
Amounts awarded	\$11,000	\$27,000	\$32,000
Duration of grant	Terminated	Extended	Expired 6/30/2019

The grants review committee approved, and Commerce awarded, three matching grants in 2018 totaling \$70,000. The grant committee also received interest from two additional entities, but these organizations withdrew, citing inability to meet the matching fund requirement. Commerce terminated the Global Business Resources grant in October due to cause. The grantee was not responsive.

Program Participation

Participation-- 43.329.070(2)(b)	Global Business Resources	WHA Education Foundation	Whatcom Community College
Individuals enrolled	0	No data reported	25
Individuals completing program	0	No data reported	No data reported

The Whatcom Community College and Washington Hospitality Association Education Foundation began training classes in fall 2018 and spring 2019. The timeframe for these training programs varies from on-line training a few hours, to two-year programs. WHA Education Foundation is expected to report enrollment data in June 2020. Whatcom Community College has reported data on enrollees; however as far as employment numbers, they will report these annually once the training program is complete.

Employment

Employment-- 43.329-070(2)(c)	Global Business Resources	WHA Education Foundation	Whatcom Community College
Employment using skills for which they trained	0	No data reported	No data reported

Other Information

Other Information-- 43.329.070(2)(d)	Global Business Resource	WHA Education Foundation	Whatcom Community College
What recruitment techniques were used	Career fairs, interactive presentations at Clover Park Technical College	Websites, social media, government agency partnerships and membership engagement	Chemical Dependency Professional recruiter/student support advisor, brochures and marketing video
Target audience	Veterans	Rural and underserved communities	Rural and underserved communities

Grant Review Committee and Timeline

Commerce convened an 11-member committee consisting of representatives from the 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; and two representatives from the Washington Apprenticeship and Training Council.

The first committee meeting was held Oct. 11, 2017. In accordance with the law, the grant review committee established criteria for ranking eligible applicants for matching grants including:

- Potential to reach a broad audience that includes 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 of their skilled worker training program;
- Potential to fill existing needs; and
- Demonstrated ability to provide monetary contributions and secure an industry partner.

The application process opens Jan. 1, and awards are announced on April 1 of each year. The program expires on July 1, 2022. There is \$40,000 available for the next application process.

Recommendations

In 2017, the Associated General Contractors of Washington and the Washington Hospitality Association approached the Legislature for funding to address skilled worker shortages within their industries. They modeled their request based on the success of the state of Colorado's Skilled Worker Outreach, Recruitment and Key Training Grant Program.

The table below summarizes the differences between the two states.

Skilled Worker Training		
Program Elements	Colorado	Washington
Appropriation	\$7.5 million per biennium	\$300,000 per biennium
Match Requirements	1:1 cash or in-kind	2:1 match, cash only
Funding Duration	Ongoing	Discontinued after 1 biennium

In the first nine months of the program, Colorado has had 2,817 individuals recruited in the training programs with 357 individuals completing the programs and 111 becoming employed. By comparison, Washington's SWA program attracted only three applicants and generated only 25 participants to training programs in its first year. The Legislature discontinued funding for Washington's SWA program during the 2019-2021 biennium.

However, the 2019 Legislature did make a historic investment in workforce education through the passage of HB 2158, the workforce investment act. This bill will substantially increase the number of low-income students in community and technical colleges and four-year institutions. In addition, HB 2158 will strongly connect academic learning with work-related learning and skills. These career-connected-learning activities will include career awareness and exploration, career preparation, and career launch. The career connected learning activities are being developed and advanced through a cross-agency workgroup.

Commerce recommends that the HB 2158 cross-agency workgroup review the SWA program and evaluate whether it has potential to enhance career preparation or career launch activities of the workforce investment act. Commerce also recommends that the SWA program termination date be changed from June 2022 to June 2021 in RCW 43.329.900.